ORSON WELLES : SACRED BEASTS

WORDS BY **ORSON WELLES**

PLAY BY AJ SCHAAR

FOR **RICHARD BAIRD**

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Part life, part bullfight, everything in *Orson Welles : Sacred Beasts* is true—and also, just a story.

Using only Orson's own words, and in collaboration with Orson's pioneering "essay film" style ("an entirely new kind of work"), Orson's autobiographical world unfolds (in the first-person) alongside the dramatic narrative ("the noble tale") of a little boy and a fighting bull.

This "story," despite being scripted, is "perfectly true," and a "solid declaration of love."

A transformative work composed of transformative work, *Orson Welles : Sacred Beasts* is a magnificent reminder that (among other things) all the world loves to see the experts and establishment made fools of, and while that can come at a dangerous price, the fight is worth it.

"I can think of nothing that an audience won't understand.
The only problem is to interest them; once they are interested,
they understand anything in the world."
-Orson Welles

"Don't give them what you think they want.
Give them what they never thought was possible."
-Orson Welles

SCENE 1: "THE ACT OF THE CAPE" (INTRODUCTION)

OW: Hello, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Orson Welles. I've come to call again. But *how*… you ask. Go on. *("how?")*

Good question, thank you for asking. *How* have I come to call again. I have been known to fake my own death. I have been a magician, and an escape artist. I have been involved in a variety of interplanetary invasion. I have said, "Oh they'll love me when I'm dead." And, of course you already know this, but the truth is, dead artists speak to us all every day, out of the living past. So I simply am as I am; I hate to be held down by what exists; I like to manufacture what I want. So, *what do I want…* you wonder now. Don't you.

("yes, what do you want?")

Mentalism. I want, from my perspective, to put the record straight—and to go to work again. But mostly—although, no one's ever heard of an unemployed audience—I've come back for you. But *why*… *("why?")*

Thank you. Theatre is a social act… 'Why' is a big question. Which means it has a big answer… For one thing, I've got a story. I've worked on it for years, years. And I suddenly thought, I'm crazy not to do it *now*.

Because there's a hint of twilight in the smog over Hollywood now. Movie theatres are emptying across the land. Today's sex symbols are fuzzy carbon copies of the old freewheeling originals, the gorgeous, legendary vamps and sheiks. And the new crop of Method actors have their own kind of conformism; there is no madness in their Method. Broadway has too few critics, too much money, and it's so musical-oriented; a straight show is just something dignified and nice that happens to get into one of the smaller houses now… And all the pseudo-suburbanites in the film colony today, who come in two camps the t-shirts and the sports jackets, are just trying to be more "accurate" reflections of America than the *dazzling pioneers* who blazed *screenland's frontiers*…

There *used* to be a frenzy; a buccaneering hurly-burly; a cheerful violence, and a cutthroat anarchy. But all that turbulence is silenced now. The cheerful gaudiness is mostly gone. *Everything's* got a little bit more polished, and a little cheaper. That's class… Art itself has become an "industry," yearning for "respectability." Does that sound like art?... A respectable product of industry? *("no.")*

The theatre profession, in particular, used to have no contamination from "respectability." In fact, it's only recently we began to say: theatre "profession." That was when the mention of Art began to embarrass us, and that was the beginning of our fall from grace—when we began to aspire to a mediocre "professional" rank. Because before that, we, in common with all artists, had no rank at all; we stood in our on dignity outside of protocol. And I hold that we had more to give to our Art and to our *audiences* when we were royal bums. When our crowns were tin, but they were crowns. When we were a motley crew of show folk in a spirit far closer to the circus, to burlesque, and to commedia dell'arte. When we *celebrated* the old royal nonsense and glory. That glory has all but died out now, as the theatre reduced itself to a mere "profession" beneath Hollywood. And Hollywood became an "industry," and the glory dimmed there, too.

I believe no Art is a product of industry. I believe Art must surpass *reality itself.* It must. Because making a greener and more just world requires more than the merely practical or "professional." It requires the dreaming of great dreams. Acts of mercy. Epic chants. Shouts of affirmation to mark where we've been, what we've accomplished; *celebrations* of God's glory and the dignity of man! That's why I'm here… now.

(Orson holds aloft a white handkerchief. A trumpet sounds.)

(like an incantation) Be of good heart cry the dead artists out of the living past.

(With a flourish from Orson, band music plays, as at a Spanish bullfight.)

I'm going to tell you several stories now, at the same time, in my own words and style, including the story, the true story, of a bullfighter and a fighting bull! *(almost to himself)* I've been trying to tell this story for so long!

(He changes the white handkerchief to red, like a cape.
He perhaps briefly wipes his eye with the handkerchief; a non-display of emotion.)

Don't be worried, you don't have to approve of bullfights, I don't ask you to, and I certainly wouldn't dream of defending the spectacle. You can go right ahead and plug for the bull to win and there'll be no hard feelings about it. A bull is the hero of this story. Only, don't forget, if you want a happy ending, that depends, of course, on where you stop the story…

(Orson makes the handkerchief disappear. Trumpets sound. Lights shift.)

SCENE 2: THE BOY BEFRIENDS THE BULL

Our story begins, of course, with the bull.

(Establish the Bull; the sound of the band and excited voices fading away.)

I was always most interested in the fighting bulls. There are those who might find it ridiculous that I should be *more* interested in the bulls than in the *bullfighters*—because the bulls are going to *die*. But a bullfight isn't a sport, it is a tragedy, in three acts, and this noble creature is the hero of that tragedy. His innocence, and his death, is the basis of the tragedy of the bullfight. Yes, I was always most interested in this sacrificial beast this… Sacred beast.

I won't get into the spiritualism of it. I think that's been pretty well covered by others. But of all creatures in the world, there's nothing more *magnificent* than a fighting bull. And nothing which lives is quite so *dangerous*. He is easily the most dangerous animal on earth. He is literally a fighting animal. He doesn't fight to defend anything, but fights from *pleasure*, having been bred to do exactly that for at least 2,000 years.

There have been savage spectacles in which bulls have been pitted against tigers and lions and wild elephants from Africa. And in these spectacles, on each occasion, every recorded instance shows us that the bull is the victor. He can kill anything else in the world, and indeed, *will* attempt to kill anything on sight. I've seen a young bull of six or seven weeks old attack a locomotive, a moving locomotive, ram it head on, and die of course.

You *can* approach fighting bulls out in the country, if they're in a herd, if there are many of them together. But if they're separated, you'd better be very careful, and you'd better be mounted on a good, fast horse, or you're in trouble.

However, it is possible to make *pets* out of fighting bulls.

(Establish a pastoral atmosphere.)

This famous, and very interesting story of ours is about one of the bravest of all bulls, who, in just such a way, was made into a pet by a little boy on a bull ranch.

…If I told you my daughter, as a child, was playing in the jungle with a king cobra, it would be no less remarkable than this…

The name of the bull was Bonito. And he was a brave bull indeed. He was from a very fine strain. And the little boy on the ranch, whose name was Juan, Juanito, befriended the little bull, finding him almost dying out on the ranch, and fed him, took care of him, really saved his life at the beginning.

It's a sentimental story I'm afraid, but a true one.

They became great chums, the little boy and the bull. Growing up together, playing games. When others were running from those fighting bulls, the little boy was playing the sort of game that you would play with a big dog, or with a horse.

When it was discovered that the boy and the bull were friends, it was a Great Scandal. Because if a fighting bull is tamed, his usefulness is obviously over. Ferdinand, the bull in the fairy story who preferred to sniff the flowers and didn't want to fight, is just exactly the sort of bull nobody wants in a bullring. Because the purpose of a bullfight is exactly that—the bull must fight. And the more brave he is, and the better he fights, the more wonderful things the bullfighter can do with him. And the more beautiful will be the spectacle of his death. The least cruelty is associated with those bulls who are the bravest.

But when a bull becomes tame, of course, it will not charge the horse or face the bullfighter as he ought to, so I'm afraid the little boy was made to suffer a good bit for having made a pet of the fighting bull, Bonito. But he kept running out anyway, on moonlit nights he'd jump over the fence and get out into the fields and whistle. And a great dark shape would detach itself from the others in the herd and come moving toward the little boy. And they'd play together…

(Establish the Moon.)

The moon is a very important thing for me. Ever since childhood. My childhood with my *father* was like a childhood in the 1870's.

—I like digressions, don't you? Look at Gogol. Read the first few pages of Dead Souls again and you'll see how one mad little digression can give reverberation and density to ordinary narrative—

My *father* was the inventor of a popular bicycle lamp, and he lived, sometimes in China, and sometimes in a tiny hotel that he'd bought in a village called Grand Detour. Population 130—formerly 10,000 but the railroad didn't go through. No electric lights. Horse-drawn buggies. An old dance floor with springs in it so that

folks would feel light on their feet. When I was little I used to sneak up there at night, and dance by moonlight, with the dust rising up from the floor.

Grand Detour was one of those lost worlds, one of those *Edens* you get thrown out of. But that one… was *invented* by my *father*.

That *Eden* people lose is a theme that interests me—a recurring theme in all our civilization. That marvelous little corner in *time;* that forgotten *place…*

(The Moon fades; "It's over," is the feel; a plain-stage light is established.)

…I like to give the audience hints of scenes. No more than that. Give them too much and they won't contribute anything themselves. Give them just a *suggestion* and you get them working *with* you.

You know, a fragile miracle is expected every evening in the theatre. The artist presides over that miracle. The audience defends it. And nobody performs the miracle—everybody contributes to it. *We create* the illusion we are not alone.

…I should have stayed in the theatre. Movies will make you famous; television will make you rich; but theatre will make you good.

And, you know, many of the most enduring works in art are never paid for at all. How much do you think Homer got for his 'Iliad' or Dante for his 'Paradisio.' Only bitter bread and salt and walking up and down other people's stairs. There are premiere works of man that stand for centuries without a signature… Outliving not just their creators, but their cities, their civilizations…

Anonymous Glories.

Everything is a contradiction.

We are made out of oppositions.

Everything about me is a contradiction and so is everything about everybody else. There's a philistine and an aesthete in all of us, and a murderer and a saint. You don't reconcile the poles. You just recognize them.

This is Samuel Johnson on the subject of what he calls our "contrarieties." He says, "There are goods in ourselves so opposed that we cannot seize both, and in trying, fail to seize either. Of the blessings set before you, make your choice."

Well. There are a few of us left in this conglomerated world of ours who still trudge stubbornly along a lonely, rocky road. We don't move nearly as fast as our cousins on the freeway. We don't even get as much accomplished, just as a family-sized farm can't possibly raise as much as an agricultural factory. And what we do come up with has no special right to call itself better. It's just different. But this is our choice—our *contrariety*. And if there's any excuse needed, it's that we're simply following the old American tradition of the *maverick*.

A maverick goes his own way—but he doesn't think that it's the only way or ever claim that it's the best one, except maybe for himself. For instance. I am a magician. But the thing *I* like about *magic* is that it's connected with the *circus*…

(Establish a carnival atmosphere.)

…and with a kind of corny velvet-and-gold-braid sort of world that's gone and that fascinates me and that I like. That's really it… It's not the skillful wonder-worker part of it, but the ambiance of a magic show that delights me. It's the kind of slightly seedy, slightly carnival side of it. I'm a terrible pushover for all kinds of small-time show business; that calls for real suspension of disbelief!

Houdini, the master magician, said, "A magician is just an actor pretending to be a magician." He was easily the greatest showman of my time—an expert in miracles. But to *me*, magic just begins and ends with the figure of a magician who asks an audience, for a moment, to *believe* that the lady is floating in the air. In other words, to be eight years old for a minute…

I'm proud to say Harry Houdini was my teacher in magic when I was young; as a favor to my father, he gave me my first lessons in conjuring…

(A magic trick's atmosphere. Have an usher assigned as a plant—a "volunteer.")

I would appreciate the loan of any small object from your pocket—a key, a box of matches, a coin… Good, sir. Hold it up, 10 feet above your head. And watch out for the slightest *hint* of hanky-panky. Behold. A transformation. Before our very eyes we've changed your key—into a coin. What happened to the key? It's been returned to you. Look closely, sir. You'll find the key—back in your pocket.

("Volunteer" produces the key; applause, presumably; a bow from Orson, and applause for the usher. Possibly, "I don't really believe in homages in things, but.")

My favorite story about *Houdini* has to do with his visit to the Kremlin. It was a private performance for the tsar and the royal family—with Rasputin in the background, gnashing his teeth with jealous rage. Houdini asked this small audience to write on slips of paper *some impossible thing* they would like to have performed. One of them wrote, "Ring the bells in the Kremlin." Or, Houdini had *arranged* it so this slip of paper would be written and chosen, apparently *freely* chosen.

(Orson smiles briefly at the "volunteer.")

Now, to ring the bells in the Kremlin may not sound like much, but as a matter of fact, at that time, there were no ropes connecting the bells, and for a century at least, they'd been silent.

But, after this command from the chosen slip of paper, Houdini moved to the window, raised his arm… it was a snowy night… there was a moment's dramatic pause, and then, over the snow-covered square, there could be heard, first very dimly, and finally in full chorus… the bells of the Kremlin.

You can imagine the effect of that! Particularly on Rasputin.

You want to know how he did it? (Women always do and men don't; women don't like to be fooled and men do. All magicians know *that's* the essential difference between the sexes.)

Now, ordinarily, I don't explain how tricks are done, but in this particular case I think I can tell you, since it's unlikely that anyone will ever do this particular trick again. As Houdini raised his hand, his *wife*, who was standing at a window in a hotel at the other side of the square—near the bell tower—his wife received his signal, and with an air gun, she *shot* the bells…

(Orson raises his hand; sound of the bells being shot and ringing in chorus.)

Like that.

Always struck me as a particularly ingenious miracle, and of course, those kind of tricks are the best, really.

I'd sit in Houdini's dressing room backstage of the Hippodrome, or wherever it happened to be, and he'd make me go over and over a new trick. He told me once,

I remember, “You must practice a trick, Orson, a *thousand* times before you perform it.”

And immediately after he told me that, Carl Bremer, who was a manufacturer of magic tricks, came into the dressing room with a vanishing lamp and he said, “Look at this, Harry, I just made this.”

And Harry said, “Fine, I’ll put it in the show *tonight*.”

That was the beginning of, well, great disillusionment on my part. Because, of course, you don’t practice tricks a thousand times, you practice sleights of hand and methods of doing tricks… Misdirects, opposites…

Like the little boy and the fighting bull.

(Trumpets sound.)

SCENE 3: THE BULL GROWS UP AND IS TESTED

(Reestablish the pastoral atmosphere.)

As the years went by, of course, the bull got very much bigger, very much more *dangerous*, but he always remembered the little boy.

There had been the *tienta*—the testing of the bull. And in this testing, our friend Bonito the fighting bull was seen to be extremely brave, in spite of having been made a pet. So, there were great hopes for him, because he was a magnificent specimen.

And then time came for him to go to the bullring in Madrid to fight. The time for Bonito to be moved. He was detached from his herd—a difficult and expert process. He was put into a wagon. And a *procession* started for the bullring in Madrid. And, on the way, the little boy joined the procession. I’ve forgotten whether he climbed onto the back of wagon, or rode a horse, or what, but anyway, he was riding with his friend Bonito to Madrid, up the long roads that lead across the steppes of Spain.

(Hooves and wheels upon old roads.)

If you were seventeen and a rich young prince of a pulp writer like me, you could get to be a bullfighter by the simple expedient of buying the bulls. So that was how

I worked it. All on a very small, provincial scale, you understand, but towards the end, for a couple of times, I got paid myself. Almost nothing, but still, for a few minutes there I was a pro—scared to death of course, but having the time of my life.

What made that little bullfighting caper *possible* for me was also what made it *possible* for me, a year earlier, to launch myself in show business not as a spear-carrier, but as a *star,* at the Gate Theatre in Dublin…

What made it *possible?* I had this scholarship to Harvard, and I was willing to do anything if it would keep me out of school!

Including, traveling through Ireland with a donkey and cart and a big box of paints. I wanted to be a painter…

Sorry I'm jumping around like this because that's the way it *was*…

It was a ridiculous and romantic thing to do, to go and buy a donkey and cart and travel around and sleep under it; but when I was sixteen, I saw no glorious future for myself, and I didn't have the slightest itch of ambition… I was smoking cigars; sort of making myself older to escape the truant officers... I'd worked up this deep voice that I'm still stuck with. A specialist once told me I was born with the vocal cords of a tenor. As I say, I'd do *anything* to avoid being educated!

And, you know, sleeping under the cart was very nice in the summer. But by the time I got to Dublin, I'd given all my paintings away to Irish farmers who'd given me food; I'd run out of paint—and money; the donkey had to go up for auction; winter was coming in. My career, as you might call it, was at a crossroads. So, I fell into the theatre—I was out of money. That was how it happened.

(Establish Dublin.)

I went and I lied like a maniac to the directors of the Gate Theatre, which was a great theatre of Dublin. I told them I was a famous star from New York. (I'd never been on stage, had no idea what it was like to be on the stage, and I never would have been able to tell such a lie if I had had *any ambition* to be on the stage.)

But I informed the directors of the Gate Theatre that I was that same Welles they must have read about. Just for the lark of it, I told them, I'd enjoy the experience of playing with their company for a play or two—that is, if any *leading* roles were

available. (When you tell a lie like that, what can they do to you? Kill you? They gave me a star part.) So that's how I began—right at the top. I've been working my way down ever since.

I've never really equaled that success…*(sighs)* And what got me up there on the stage, and in the bullring, and on the radio, and into Hollywood for that matter, was really just an absolutely *perfect* lack of *ambition.*

But then, Thornton Wilder had heard of my Dublin success—I told you, I was a *star*—and he wanted to introduce me to some people in New York. Got cast in a play there, started turning up for auditions in radio there—never landing a job—until I met Paul Stewart. He's a lovely man; for years he was one of the main pillars of our Mercury broadcasts. He can't be given too much credit. Well, he started me off in radio—got me on something called *Cavalcade of America*. Educational they called it. Paid $18.50 a shot. Then suddenly—I've forgotten just how, but quite abruptly—I was a *big earner*. For a whole lot of shows, none of them mine. With a whole series of voices, all of them anonymous.

There were a few of us back in radio's golden age who used to make *quite important bread* by skipping nimbly from one soap opera to another. Soon, I was doing so many I didn't have time to rehearse. I'd come to a bad end in some tear-jerker, rush up two floors (they'd hold the elevator for me) and somebody'd hand me a script and whisper, "Chinese mandarin, seventy-five years old," and off I'd go again. Some days I had to commute between the networks by ambulance. If there's a law that says you've got to be sick to hire one, at least I was never arrested for breaking it.

It was those years that I did The Shadow. Lamont Cranston, that was me. My God, I didn't even know what was going to happen when I was in them. Not rehearsing—which was part of my deal with the sponsor[1]—made it so much more interesting. When I was thrown down the well, or into some fiendish snake pit, I never knew how I'd get out! "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men…? The Shadow knows *(the laugh that follows)...*" Peter Bogdonovich once told me, "It's marvelous—The Shadow's become a part of American mythology." I told Peter, "$185 dollars every week—you bet it was marvelous."

[1] Blue Coal was the sponsor, if anyone asks (seemed a little "busy" to include).

Some shows paid less, a few of them more. But without a single radio listener *ever* having heard my name, I was taking home about $1,500 weekly. But, "taking home" isn't accurate; a big hunk of that went to the government. To the WPA. The Works Progress Administration. The government, you see, ran theatres during the Depression to give work to unemployed actors. I was part of that, but I wasn't unemployed. I was so employed I forgot how to sleep. I ran *two* of those federal theatres with Jack Houseman. One up in Harlem—an all-black project except for us. There were lots of those projects all over the country. It was the only moment in history when America had a sort of national theatre. I got to know Roosevelt in the WPA. The Mercury Theatre grew out of the WPA—from a radio production we made into theatre with most of our lead actors in radio. People like Agnes Moorehead, Joseph Cotton, Everett Sloane, Ray Collins, George Coulouris, Erskine Sanford, Frank Readick. The ones who played in Kane—were all from radio.

Via the radio *we* sent some Martians to America in something called War of the Worlds…

You have to realize… we had been criticized a good bit for wanting to dabble in science fiction, so we made a special effort to make our show as *realistic* as possible. We did on the show exactly what would have happened if the world had been invaded. Had a little music playing *("Ramón Raquello" radio music plays)* and then an announcer coming on and saying, *(music stops)* "Excuse me, we interrupt this program to bring you an announcement from Jersey City. Jersey City has just fallen. We take you back to our studio." *(music plays and fades out)*

We had no idea *(chuckles)* how effective it would be. The *kind* of response—that was merrily anticipated by us all. The *size* of it, of course, was flabbergasting. Six minutes after we'd gone on the air, the switchboards in radio stations right across the country were lighting up like Christmas trees. Houses were emptying, churches were filling up; from Nashville to Minneapolis there was wailing in the street and the rending of garments. Twenty minutes in, and we had a control room full of very bewildered cops. They didn't know who to arrest or for what, but they did lend a certain tone to the remainder of the broadcast. We began to realize, as we plowed on with the destruction of New Jersey, that the extent of our American lunatic fringe had been underestimated!

Walter Winchell went on air to say, “Mr. and Mrs. America, there is no cause for alarm! America has not fallen.” We had no idea the extent of the thing. No. And I certainly personally had no idea what it would mean to me. As a matter of fact, my life was threatened, and I had suddenly become a sort of… national event!

(Trumpets sound. Establish Spain.)

SCENE 4: THE BULL IS TAKEN TO THE RING & GOES BERZERK

On the way to Madrid, Bonito the bull got out.

(Screams from a fleeing public.)

There’s a version of this story where the little boy opened up the wagon where the bull was kept in the hope of releasing his pet and giving him his freedom.

Whether the little boy let him out or not, the bull *did* get out and ran through the town breaking down everything. And when I say everything… If you could see one of these beasts on the loose—I’ve seen it, I’ve seen it in Mexico as a matter of fact, not in Spain—they can go directly through earth walls. They will pick out a certain, any one person, no one knows why, pick out one person in a crowd, go for him, follow him up the *stairs* onto the second floor of a building, and there, *murder* the person. As I say, *right through walls,* all the rest of it. Anyway, there’s a tremendous riot; many people injured, and injured *seriously*, before Bonito was captured, put back into his wagon, and taken to Madrid.

So now he’s there, and he’s put in his corral. It’s Saturday. On Sunday, at five o’clock in the afternoon, he will meet the great *torero*, and fifteen minutes after he is let out into the arena, Bonito will die.

The matador must kill the bull within fifteen minutes from the first pass, at most. After ten minutes, if the bull is still alive, the *presidente* will order an *aviso*, a warning with the signal of a trumpet. Another three minutes, another *aviso*. Another two minutes and the *presidente* will order the bull to be returned to his pen or taken out to the street to be slaughtered, not tortured to death.

Man is a crazy animal. And also quite marvelous, too. I think all things are true about people… Did you know, in many countries you can only be respected if you don’t live there? They think, “There must be something wrong with him if he’s here.” One can’t help thinking wistfully of our father’s day, when one could *move*

about in the world without being watched so *closely*... I have a good deal of experience in crossing borders and coping with coppers all over the world; nowadays, we're treated like demented or delinquent children. We're guilty until proven innocent.

I've been in the hands of the police, with drawn guns, demanding what it was that I had in my baggage. "Open your bag," they said. And I said, "Well, I'm afraid to, 'cause the bag will blow up." And they asked me what I meant by that and I explained that I had an atom bomb. I said I was going to La Scala, and I didn't like the opera, I was angry at the management and was going to make an outrage. They said, "You mustn't joke with the police," and made me hang around much longer than they had to. Let me out around 2 in the morning…

Now, I'm willing to admit that the policeman has a difficult job; a very hard job. But it's the essence of our society that the policeman's job *should* be hard. He's there to protect, protect the free citizens—not to chase criminals. That's an incidental part of his job. Only in a police state is the job of a policeman easy because: while he's less certain about the free citizen, *he knows what to do with the criminal*.

…We *should* be grateful to the police. But I'm grateful for the laws that protect us from the police. And all the red-tapism that goes with the police as well. All those idiotic forms. You know those forms. State your name. State your race and religion. Well now why should I confide my religion to the police? And my race? I don't think anybody's race is anybody's business. So, let's include the bureaucrat with the police as part of one big monstrous thing. You *may* say, 'Just a minute, why shouldn't we give them this information, why should we make *trouble* for the *police?'* Well, the truth is, why should the *policeman* make *trouble* for us?

(incredulous) ' *Why* should we make *trouble* for the *police?'* Well, the truth is, we *don't*, because: we don't want to get in *trouble* with the *police!* We're told to *cooperate* with authorities…

Just to be clear here, I'm not an anarchist. I don't want to overthrow the rule of law. On the contrary, I want to *bring* the policemen to law!

That's why I'd like to read you an affidavit now… duly sworn to by Isaac Woodard Junior… It states as follows: *(reads)*

I am twenty-seven years old and a veteran of the United States Army, having served fifteen months in the South Pacific, and having earned one battle star. I was honorably discharged on February 12, 1946, at Camp Gordon, Georgia. At the Greyhound bus terminal in Atlanta, while I was in uniform, I purchased a ticket to Winnsboro, South Carolina, and took the bus headed there to pick up my wife to come to New York to see my father and mother.

About one hour out of Atlanta, the bus driver stopped at a small drug store; as he stopped I asked if he had time to wait for me until I had the chance to go to the restroom. He *cursed* and said no. When *he cursed* at me, *I cursed* him back. When the bus got to Aiken, he got off and went and got the police.

They didn't give me a chance to explain. The policeman struck me across the head with a billy club, and told me to shut up. After that, the policeman grabbed me by my left arm and twisted it behind my back. I figured he was trying to make me resist. I did not resist against him. He asked me, "Was I discharged?" And I told him, "Yes." That was when he started beating me with a club, hitting me across the top of the head. After that I grabbed his club and wrung it out of his hand. Another policeman came up and threw his gun on me and told me to drop the club or he'd drop me. So, I dropped the club. After I dropped it, the second policeman held his gun on me while the other one was beating me. He knocked me unconscious. After I commenced to recover myself, he yelled, "Get up!" I started to get up, and he started punching me in my eyes with the end of his club. When I finally got up, he pushed me inside the jailhouse and locked me up. I woke up the next morning, and could not see.

A policeman said, "Let's go up here and see what the judge says." I told him that I could not see, or come out, I was blind. He said, "Feel your way out." He said I'd be alright after I washed my face. He led me to the judge, and after I told the judge what happened, he said, "We don't have that kind of stuff down here." Then the policeman said, "He wrung the billy club out of my hand, and I told him if he didn't drop it, I'd drop him." That's how I know it was the same policeman that beat my eyes out. After that the judge spoke and said, "I fine you $50 dollars or thirty days in the row." And I said I'd pay the $50, but I did not have the $50 dollars at the time, so the policeman said, "You have some money there in your wallet." He took my wallet and took out all I had, it was a total of $40 dollars, and took $4 dollars from my watch pocket. I had a cheque for six-hundred and ninety-

four dollars and seventy-three cents, which was my mustering-out soldiers' deposit. He said to me, "Can you see how to sign this check? You have a government cheque." I told him, "No, sir." So, he gave it back to me after that. Took me back, locked me up in the jail, the policeman did. I stayed in there for a while, and after a few minutes, he came and asked me if I wanted a drink of whiskey. If I took a drink of whiskey, I'd feel better. I told him, "No, sir." I didn't care for any.

At 5:30 that evening they took me to the veterans' hospital, in Columbia, South Carolina. One of the contact men came round one day and said to me they were going to take out a pension for me. I believe that the doctor who cared for me was named Dr. Clarence. I told him what had happened to me, he made no comment. But told me I should… join a blind school.

Sworn to me on this 23rd day of April 1946. *(there's no more to read)*

Now it seems the officer of the law who blinded this young *black* soldier has not been named! Til we know more about him, we'll call that policeman: Officer X.

(Pause.)

We pause now for a word from the philosophers. A short reminder regarding the matter of payment and cost. Nothing is paid back. That does not happen. Not on earth. A favor cannot be paid back, neither can a wrong. We *say* a criminal *pays* for his crime, when we lock him up; a murderer *pays* for his murder when the state murders him; but society is merely sweeping its dirt underneath the carpet. We may sometimes manage to curb the thing called crime… But the man called a criminal is never punished; he can be inconvenienced, or tortured, or done away with, but he can never *pay* for what he has done. If the ledger is ever balanced it will not be by him, but by someone having nothing to do with him; it will be balanced by acts of *virtue*. The only thing that can be *paid back* is the *fiction* we call *money*. Because *true debts*, the debt of a friend, or a foe, can never be *canceled*. So much for *payment*.

Price. That's something else. There's a price for everything. There's nothing that does not have its cost. Joy and inspiration and mere pleasure have a market value precisely computed in terms of their opposites.

The cost of youth is age; the cost of age is death. You want love? The cost of love is your independence. You want to be independent, do you? Then pay the price and know what it is to feel alone. Your mother paid for you with pain. Nothing, nothing in this living world is *free*. The free *air* costs you the life-consuming effort of breath. *Freedom itself* is priced at the rate of the *citizenship* it earns and holds. What does it cost to be a black soldier? In Aiken, South Carolina, it cost a man his *eyes*. What does it cost to wear over your skeleton a pinkish tint 'officially' described as 'white'? In Aiken, South Carolina, it cost a man his *soul*.

Officer X will never *pay* for the two eyes he beat out of the soldier's head.

Officer X still has his eyes but cannot see. If only he could find himself out blinking in the sun, we'd know that the world was young after all. That chaos was behind us, not ahead. And there would be shouting of trumpets to raise the dead at Gettysburg. A thunder of canon would declare the tidings of peace, and all the bells of liberty would laugh out loud in the streets to celebrate goodwill towards all men!

I wanna say this. There is no room in America for Jim Crow. Race hate isn't an opinion every citizen has a right to. Race hate isn't an opinion—it's a phobia. It isn't even a viewpoint—race hate is a disease. It certainly isn't a "feeling" against some races—a "feeling" describes an element of one's own human nature. And RACE HATE IS NOT HUMAN NATURE. RACE HATE IS THE ABANDONMENT OF HUMAN NATURE. Oh, for several generations there may be men who *can't* be weaned away from the fascist "feelings" of race hate… But *we can* deny such men responsibility in our public affairs.

(Orson is spotlit.)

That's why I'll *never* lose you, Officer X. If they try you, I'm going to watch the trial. If they jail you, I'm going to wait for your first day of freedom. You won't be free of me. I want to see who's waiting for you at the prison gates. I want to see who will acknowledge that they know you. I'm interested in your future. I will take careful note of all your destinations. Assume another name and I will be careful that the name you would forget is *not* forgotten. Who am I? A masked avenger from the comic books? No sir, merely an inquisitive citizen of America. And I *will* find the means to remove from you all refuge, Officer X. You can't get rid of me. We have an appointment, you and I. And only *death* can *cancel* it.

(Sense of finale, and softening.)

I'd like it very much if somebody would make a great big international organization for the protection of the individual in society. There could be offices at every frontier, and whenever we're presented with one of those idiotic *forms*, we could say, "Oh no, I'm sorry, it's against the rules of our organization to fill out that form." And they'd say, "Ah, but it's regulations," and we'd say, "Very well, see our lawyer," because if there were enough of us, our dues would pay for the best lawyers in all the countries of the world. And we could bring to court these invasions of our privacy—incursions on our human rights—and test them under law. It would be *nice* to have that sort of organization, be *nice* to have a sort of a card—like a union card, with a border and bright colors, so that it would catch the eye of the police, and they'd know who they were dealing with—it should be more official than the 'officialdom' at large, with lots of seals and things like that on it—and it should read: **This is to certify that the bearer is a member of the human race.** If such an outfit is ever organized, put me down as a charter member. Be of good heart…

(Trumpet sounds. Cathedral bells.)

SCENE 5: THE BOY PRAYS, THE MATADOR PRAYS, THE BULL WAITS IN A WOODEN CAGE

Sunday morning in a great cathedral, we see our little boy, Juanito, in front of the altar on his knees, praying for his pet. You can imagine that he is very miserable indeed, to lose his dear friend.

And if we look carefully, we can see also in the cathedral, and also on his knees… the bullfighter, praying for his life. They prayed side by side. The boy for the bull's life, the *torero* for his own. Then they left by separate doors. The bullfighter to wait in the shadows under the arena, sweating with fear, as matadors always do, even on the coolest afternoon. The little boy to spend the last tearful moments with his friend, the big, wise-looking beast, waiting for death in a wooden cage.

(Pause.)

…You know, I made a bargain with God once—which was a sin to do, but I did it. Certainly a mistake…

The first dinner party I went to, on my first night in Hollywood… it was a terrible experience. Sam Goldwin, Jack Warner—all the old-time Hollywood movie colony was there, sultans, all that. Somebody said, "Why, here's Orson Welles, come from the theatre in New York, and he's a famous storyteller. Tell us a story, Orson."

Well, ah, how nice.

Everybody looked eager and some people got up and sat closer. Finished drinks and set them down.

(Sounds of an after-dinner party.)

I had heard a funny joke that morning, so I said, ah, "I heard a funny joke this morning." And I got into it. Fine. And when I was about halfway through… I realized I didn't remember the end of it. So, I began to *invent…* what *might* be the end… and this only made for more eager expressions, because they were *sure* wherever we were getting must now be… *unendurably* funny. And that's when I said to God, "If You get me out of this, I'll never ask for anything again!" And at that moment the chandelier fell down onto the table!

(Sound of the chandelier crashing and startled screams.)

There was an earthquake. It was Hollywood, you know. …So, I don't pray anymore; I don't want to bore God.

I also don't advocate Voodoo, I don't even believe in it, but I have seen the Mark of the Voodoo. More than once.

It was a great thrill (it still thrills me). It was the opening of my production of the "Voodoo Macbeth." Not my motion picture of Macbeth, which nobody seemed to like. But the "Voodoo Macbeth" on stage. Let me assure you I did direct this production; we did it in Harlem, at a black theatre—with the WPA. I was anxious for those black artists, who were so very talented, to get an opportunity to play in the sort of thing that was usually denied them. As you know, in those days, the parts that fell to blacks were too often with bandanas and watermelons and so on. We did shows together from classical repertory. We began with a Gilbert and Sullivan… Hot Mikado we called it. We went on to Shaw, and then backwards into literature, and finally dared this production of Macbeth.

Which was laid in a West Indian island suggestive of Haiti at the time of the Black Emperor, Jean Christoph, and it worked surprisingly well. Because changing the blasted heath to the fetid jungle wasn't as ridiculous as you might think. Because the actors were so good. And because the *witches*… translated *terribly* well into witch *doctors*. Voodoo witch doctors.

And these witch doctors were specially imported from Africa, because the governments in the West Indies took the view that there was *no such thing* as Voodoo. So, we had to go all the way to the Gold Coast and import a troop. And they were quite a troop.

The only member of the coven who had any English was a dwarf with gold teeth by the name of Jazzbo. At least we called him Jazzbo up in Harlem. I don't know what his African name was. He had a diamond in every one of those gold teeth. He was quite a character. Fairly terrifying.

The other members of the troop not only spoke no English, but didn't seem to want to speak at all. They confined their communications to… drumming.

(Distant drumming.)

I suppose that in the entire history of Shakespeare in the theatre there has never been another request on the first day of rehearsal for twelve live goats.

Part of the cast and I, we said, "What?"

And Jazzbo said, "Goats. Black goats. For make devil drums."

Well, we couldn't go out and *look* for twelve live goats; we had to *requisition* them, this being a government project. We had to file the requisitions in triplicate. You can imagine what went on in Washington when they heard about that. But the goats were finally provided. The sacrificial knives were sharpened. And with the accompaniment of wild shrieks from the Voodoo priests, the poor beasts were sacrificed.

(Screaming men, and goats.)

You can imagine the effect that had on the community of Harlem. When the whole of the Lafeyette Theatre was reeking suggestively of blood…

Finally, the drums were ready, and the drumming *began*.

(Drumming, present now.)

The legend grew backstage, and indeed all over the community of Harlem, that to touch the drums… was to die. And indeed, one poor stagehand *did* touch a drum, and *did* fall from a high place, and break his neck. And after that, Jazzbo and his rhythm boys were treated with a little respect.

And then we opened, with Macbeth, and the drummers were fine, and the Voodoo sequences, that is the witch scenes, went very well indeed. And everybody seemed to like the show. The critics were very kind to us except… for Mr. Percy Hammond. Who was a very good critic. And I don't want to speak disrespectfully of the *dead*... But he did write a notice in which he said that Negroes should never be allowed to play anything except Negro subjects. Which went down of course very badly, in Harlem. And was taken to be an unfair attack on the Negro race.

At the height of a discussion on the subject, I was approached by Jazzbo, who said to me, "This critic bad man."

And I said *(offhandedly),* "Yes, he's a bad man."

(Jazzbo) "You want we make beri-beri on this bad man?"

…All this dialogue's very much like the native bearers in Tarzan and so on, I apologize for it, but it's really what went on. I said, "Yes, go right ahead and make all the beri-beri you want to."

He said, "We start drums now."

I said, "You go ahead and start the drums, just be ready for the show tonight."

He said, "Drums begin now. He die… 23 hours from now."

Drumming began. Fine. Show went on. I went home. Woke up next morning, proceeded on an ordinary course of work, and bought the afternoon paper to discover… that Mr. Percy Hammond, for unknown causes, had dropped dead in his apartment.

I know this story is a little hard to believe *(slight chuckle),* but it is circumstantially true. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy…

…Also, I thought it might be interesting for some of our *critics* to hear what *can happen*. Critics really ought to be more careful…

Another example; another first night, in Boston it was. Henry V. We were doing the show on a revolving stage, that is a turntable, big circular stage that turns. When it came to the moment of the charge—"I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips," and so on—I had devised a plan which involved *real* bows and arrows. This was… folly on my part as it later turned out.

Because I had a large target made of cork, just in the wings, and I wanted 40 of the English soldiery… played by *Harvard* men, 40 of them, it was Boston… I wanted them to shoot their *real* arrows into the wings and into the cork target.

But on opening night the revolving stage started to turn… a little bit too soon. There I was saying, "I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips—" and the turntable slowly moved, so that instead of looking off stage left, we were looking straight into the audience. 40 bows and arrows were pointed right into the theatre.

…I thought to myself, as I came to the tag, "Well, they're university fellows, from *Harvard*, they're not going to just shoot into the audience."

…And so, with a certain amount of… confidence, I launched into the great line, "Cry God for Harry, England and St. George," and there was a tremendous roar!

…And I noticed with horror… that the roar was from the audience!

…Because indeed, they had shot the arrows into the audience!

…40 of them!

We even scored a direct hit on the Dean of *Critics*.

(Sounds of arrows flying, screams, the roar of a crowd, band music, trumpets.)

SCENE 6: THE BULL FIGHTS NOBLY (THE MOMENT OF TRUTH)

Music and the great roar of the crowd. Now it's time for the bullfight!

Doors suddenly opened before Bonito the bull. The hornet sting of the ranch collar spiked into the great hump of muscle on his back. A fine entrance. Here was a great bull, and the crowd knew it. The *critics* leaned forward in their seats. The things that happen during the course of these fifteen minutes in the arena are such

as have not been seen in the *Plaza del Toros of Madrid* in a decade. To this day, we know exactly how the great bull and the great matador worked together in the blazing plaza on that historic afternoon. Every move of the cape. How Bonito charged and charged again, straight as a locomotive, noble as a hero out of Homer. Eighteen linked passes and heaven knows what extraordinary and wonderful sorts of things.

(Establish the sound of the crowd at a pass.)

There are only about 200 people in the world who can fight bulls at all—and less who can do it well. The matador is now *teaching* the bull to play a game that he's *invented*, and bringing the bull, and himself, very close to death.

(Echo the sound of the crowd at a pass, more distantly.)

To defeat your enemy, you see, you must understand them. And the moment you understand them, you love them, as they love themselves. And in that moment, you can destroy them. It is indefensible, and irresistible when everything goes as it should, for the beast, the sacrificial beast, and the man, the brave man, who engage in this ceremony.

And here we are… on a great afternoon… one which will always remain in the history of bullfighting, because Bonito has been at all moments: noble. He's been a great tragic hero. The public, all 20,000 of them are literally in tears. And the little boy, you can imagine what tears he's shedding because this is his beloved *friend*, who's facing *death*.

(Echo the sound of the crowd at the pass, more distantly.)

"…Be of good heart," cry the dead artists out of the living past…

(Like the moments before the bullfight starts.
A languid clicking of heels[2] like a metronome, adagio.)

…She had a way of walking—a special way—a kind of striding rhythm that her heels made on the pavement. I'd recognize it anywhere. I was in Paris, you know… I was in Paris every time I could invent some kind of excuse… I was still searching for some trace of her. About this time of night, about this time of year, I

[2] We are reminded of the "Girl Watching" sequence in F for Fake with Oja Kodar; this is about her.

was standing where the Boulevard Saint Michel opens out onto the quai[3]: that's where it happened.

(The clicking heels like a metronome quicken tempo, allegro.)

Suddenly—I heard those footsteps and it seemed to me (just for a moment) that my girl was moving toward me—hurrying forward—as though she'd found me in the crowd. I stood there waiting for her touch: the way she used to take me by the sleeve. I didn't turn… I was afraid to turn… I knew that there was no one there.

(The clicking heels like a metronome // stop. Now we are here:
The fervor before the gate opens; just before; may the butterflies fly in formation.)

…What did I do wrong? I don't think you have to explain what you did wrong when you fail. Good things fail all over the world, and bad things succeed. …If I work my head off and go into debt to make something, I don't deserve failure for that. And I don't deserve success either. …Then again, all you need in this life are *ignorance and confidence;* then success is *sure*. Mark Twain said that.

He wrote a lot of trash. But his masterpieces last. You can still read them with great joy. And he had a great deal of grace. Gallantry. Chivalry. Dated old virtues. It interests me those virtues still seem to speak to us when, by all logic, they're so hopelessly irrelevant… That's why I've been obsessed so long with the idea of Don Quixote… I identify with Don Quixote... I know the whole story… I identify with Don Quixote to the extent that every self-respecting *artist* should be out of step with his *time;* I believe we will find what is true and inevitable. So,

(as Quixote) "Sancho, they, are giants; and if you're afraid, get away from here and start praying while I go into fierce and unequal battle with them!"

…Eighteen linked passes and heaven knows what extraordinary and wonderful sorts of things!

(Sound of corral doors crashing open, the crowd thrills,
'Toro bravo,' we may hear them chant. This is the bullfight.)

1.Houseman and I were partners. That dissolved. …Houseman repeatedly claimed that I didn't write any part of Citizen Kane—that Mankiewicz wrote all of it. I think it's very funny he does that, because Houseman deserves some credit as a

[3] This is near the Fontaine Saint-Michel, a massive and ornate fountain that shows the archangel defeating the devil.

junior writer himself. But for some curious reason, he's never wanted to take that bow. It gives him more pleasure to say I *didn't* write it. Years later, after he effectively ended a film of Julius Caesar I was making, I ran into Houseman at a restaurant, Chasen's, and I said, "You stole my play!"

And he said, "Your play? Julius Caesar?"

And I threw a flaming can of Sterno at him. Some say the curtains caught fire, but they didn't. I don't think they did. I owe Houseman *much*, but to rewrite an old Hungarian joke: if you've got him for a friend, you don't need an enemy!

(The roar of the crowd after this pass.)

2.William Randolph Hearst ordered his press to ignore me, except to say I was a menace to America. He barred ALL OF RKO from being mentioned in his press—trying to get them to burn Citizen Kane! And Hearst, he did hurt my career some… but I didn't do him any good either! Because he IS like Kane. He never *made* any money; his great chain of newspapers basically *lost* money; he was in every sense a *failure*. Like Kane, in abusing the power of the press, he stood against the law, against civilization. He tried to make himself a king in a world without law. I expected him to fight me. Why not fight? I expected that!

(The roar of the crowd.)

3.I *didn't* expect that everyone would run as scared as they did! The best showmanship suggestion I've ever made was to RKO: that Citizen Kane should be run in tents all over America, advertised as, "This is a picture that cannot run in your local movie house!" Because if we'd done that we would have made a fortune! Because it didn't play in any major movie houses! It never played in any chain, ever, anywhere. Nobody would put it on because of Hearst. They were scared! …I always thought that courageous showmanship could have won the day. I mean, I hadn't concealed anything: RKO had read the script and went ahead and put up the money for it. If *only* they'd sold it to me, they could have got out from under, I would have been independently wealthy the rest of my life, and everybody would have been happy! They wouldn't do it! But they didn't burn it either!

(The roar of the crowd.)

4.Kane expressed some of these actions I loathe—and have *human sympathy* for. He's a damned man. He doesn't believe in anything. He's one of those damned

people that I like to play and make movies about. But what did my human sympathy for Kane get me? The French were convinced it was the absolute truth that I was a fascist—because the movie was *too clearly antifascist*. The Russians saw me play characters like Kane and said, "He's a filthy decadent." They didn't understand that I was *against* the decadence—they thought I reveled in it.

(The roar of the crowd.)

5.Financiers have *willfully* mistaken my work. Those moneymen have said of my work, *many* times, "Almost everything Orson has made was financed at least in part by Orson!" As if *that's* a good reason for them *not* to finance me! I just make the kind of films that those kind of people do *not* want to finance! They have no appreciation of art. All those financiers who were "devoted to movies" were *monsters*.

(The roar of the crowd.)

6.I don't need to tell you—but perhaps not everyone *fully* realizes yet how *fully* conglomerated movie making is. This isn't the mom and pop age. Conglomerates make movies, and they are *large* budget pictures. The whole scene is against the entrepreneur; mom and pop are in the hands of the lawyers and accountants. In my position as a *maverick entrepreneur* without any resources, I found it increasingly difficult to get my films made. And making movies with your own money is a *pretty expensive proposition*. Movies take too long to make and cost too much money. And because the money takes too long to raise, I spent most of my life, as it turns out, just *trying* to make movies!

(The roar of the crowd.)

7. Everybody was a kind of *monster…* They were *beasts* of their own special time. Harry Cohen, I've enjoyed his company through the years, you know, but he also bugged my office. He really did. The President of Columbia Pictures. I think he bugged everybody's office, but one day I found a microphone behind a picture and discovered it led up to Harry's office, so he could "tune in;" that was in the Mercury Production days. I'd say to the microphone behind the picture, "Well good morning, everybody, this is Mercury Productions beginning another day's work; we hope you enjoy it," and then I'd play the theme, for his benefit. And at the end of the day I'd say, "Well that winds it up for Mercury; tune in tomorrow!"

(Mercury theme and the roar of the crowd.)

8.These people say, "You can't do it this way." "You can't do a scene like that *because no one's ever done it that way*." …The first two weeks of Citizen Kane, I was lighting the scenes myself, because in the theatre you do your own lighting—or you used to—so I *thought* that's what a director did. My cameraman, marvelous cameraman, Gregg Toland, went behind me fixing things up, winking at everybody to keep quiet, and saying, "Anybody as ignorant as that, has a lot to teach us." So, because of Gregg, because I didn't have anybody saying, "You can't do that." I just said, "We're going to try it!" I didn't *know* it had never been done!

(The roar of the crowd.)

9 And *this* has *never been done!* I tried to tell *this story*, the story of Bonito the Bull in a film called *It's All True*. It was to be made for the Office of Latin American Affairs, for them, and for no other reason. But they didn't put up the money. Importantly. RKO *Pictures* put up the money. RKO didn't want to, but they did, because: they were being blackmailed, forced, influenced, persuaded, and every other word you would want to use by *Norman Rockefeller*, to make this contribution to the war effort! This was WWII. It was put to me, personally, by *Norman Rockefeller*, that it was my patriotic duty to go and spend a million dollars making a movie in South America, to promote Latin American affairs. I was never to get *any salary*. For eight months—for *nothing?* I didn't want to do it, but I didn't know how to refuse. So I was given ten days' notice and nothing else—no script!

(An aviso. The roar of the crowd.)

10 —First aviso—I said, "Since you want Latin American, it just so happens I have in my pocket a story about a bullfight." They didn't care! They told me that the value of this project was not in the film itself but in my making it. I had doubts about this *and* about the value of making a film for no money at all. But *Roosevelt himself* helped to persuade me!

(The roar of the crowd.)

11 I finally agreed to the Brazilian junket on the *firm guarantee* that my moviola—my film editing machine—would immediately follow me along with the footage for *Magnificent Ambersons*, which I'd spent two years working on and had recently finished shooting, and *I love editing*, so I was eagerly looking forward to

editing *Ambersons*. I got to South America. And what happened? The film never came. Moviola never came. …There was a takeover at RKO.

(The roar of the crowd. A turn of events; things are truly against the Bull now.)

12 New bosses were committed to enmity with the old bosses. Changed the RKO slogan on the stationary to "Showmanship Instead of Genius." Because all that genius talk had been so boring. In other words, the new bosses were now selling RKO pictures with a slogan about no longer having me! Although they did still have me! Albeit safely tucked away in South America. And they still had two of my movies to sell, *Journey into Fear,* and *Magnificent Ambersons,* which as I say, still needed to be cut. And they cut it without me—but with semi-hysterical committees instead. And they deliberately released it as a failure!

(The roar of the crowd.)

13 That's not sour grapes—that's really true. Because if it hadn't been a failure, they would have looked pretty silly not to have kept me. So it opened everywhere without proper advertising, without press showings—dead. Everything was done so that nothing would happen, and nothing did. I only happened to hear it had opened from a Jesuit father who had recently flown from Washington into a place where I was filming *It's All True* in the Amazon. First I heard of it!

(The roar of the crowd.)

14 But the point of the tragedy of South America didn't end with the mangling of *Ambersons* by RKO. No, it cost me a hell of a lot more than the two years I spent making *Ambersons*. It cost me many, many other pictures which I never made; and many years in which I couldn't work at all. For the new men who came to power at RKO, it was all too easy to make this giant, this script-less documentary in South America look like a crazy waste of money. And to justify their positions—which was very much in their interest to do—a truly merciless campaign was launched against me.

(The roar of the crowd.)

15 By the time I got back to America my image as a capricious and unstable wastrel was permanently fixed in the industry's mind. You know all this, of course, but the extent of that campaign and its virulence is hard to exaggerate. When I'd left, the worst that could be said about me was that I was some kind of an artist.

When I came back I was some kind of lunatic. No story was too wild—the silliest inventions were believed—I'd killed a man for publicity, I'd thrown all my furniture out of a window (I did do that, but they'd already charged me for doing it when I hadn't)—the friendliest opinion about me at home was this: "Sure, he's talented, but you can't trust him."

(An aviso.)

16 My legend was established then. Founded on the firm rock of popular conviction. Soon it was so large and life-like people couldn't see the reality which it obscured—which was the fact that RKO had mounted an assault against me in order to justify firing me while I was out of the country and couldn't protect myself.

(The roar of the crowd.)

17 I carried that legend around on my shoulders for years, years, back to hustling for cameos in other people's films. That, was The Great Scandal. And no doubt about it, the basis of the whole enormous anti-Welles edifice dates exactly from this film, this story. It's All True.

(The roar of the crowd.)

18 For years, I kept thinking I'd be able to finish it. And I kept being promised that I could. Part of my deal with 20th Century Fox—for playing Rochester in *Jane Eyre,* for instance—was that they'd buy the footage for me and that I'd be allowed to cut and finish it, but that fell through. It never worked. I tried everything. I was near it, near it, near it. And I wasted many years of my life. If I'd just forgotten it—turned my back on it the way the studio did—I would have got further ahead. But I kept trying to be loyal to it, trying to finish it. And I began a pattern of trying to finish pictures which has plagued me ever since.

(Uproarious cheers and tears from the crowd; a reeling band, like Carnivale.)

SCENE 7: THE BULL IS PARDONED

And then comes the time for the kill. The Moment of Truth. That's what it's called. There are three ways of killing the bull, but in *all* of them, you must go *over* the horns of the bull. And in *all*, the sword must enter a place called the cross, about

the size of a man's hand, very small. This is the climax of the tragedy called a bullfight!

And here we are now, just on the verge of the moment of truth… The bullfighter sights down his sword, the sword is raised…

And at this moment, the air is suddenly filled with 20,000 waving handkerchiefs!

(A white-noise hush falls.)

And the cry of a trumpet.

(A trumpets cries.)

And the bullfighter lowers his sword, smiling. Flushed with such *triumph* as comes once in a lifetime to too few men in the arena; his adversary, Bonito the bull, still furiously alive, standing his ground under the cruel sun…

Ordinarily, when handkerchiefs are brought out by the public and waved, it's because they want to indicate that they are pleased with the bullfighter, and wish him to have an ear of the bull as a sign of his success, and this happens *after* the death of the bull.

But when handkerchiefs are shown *before* the death of the bull—and this happens only once in ten years, or less than that—it means that the public wishes the bull's life to be spared. And this is what happened; this very extraordinary and unique thing.

(Orson flings up the white handkerchief; trumpets sound.)

And when this happens, the *presidente*, the authority of the bullring, stands up. And in this instance he did indeed stand up, and made a speech. Addressing himself in formal tones to the victorious bull.

"Bonito, because of your nobility, because of what you have accomplished in the *fiesta brava*, your life is pardoned. And you are enjoined to go back to the place of your birth, and beget more of your kind." And so it happened, as sometimes happens, but very rarely, that for extreme bravery, a bull was spared his life.

But Bonito doesn't understand this very eloquent and beautiful address…

(Flushed, bemused, and furiously alive.)

O judgment! Thou art fled to brutish beasts, And men have lost their reason. Bear with me, my heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, and I must *pause* till it come back to me…

(Pause.)

Silence speaks volumes but Shakespeare said everything. Brain to belly; every mood and minute of a man's season; his language is starlight and fireflies and the sun and moon; he wrote with tears and blood and beer; his words march like heartbeats. He speaks to everyone.

To afford to direct and act in all the Shakespeare and classics I did, I had to do all these commercials. I had to subsidize my Art… out of my Commercials. In other words: our world is Faustian. We live in a Faustian world. So, "Mountains and Hills come, Come and fall on me, And hide me from the heavy wrath of God…"

(Establish Doctor Faustus in Orson Welles' stage lighting.)

If we say that we have no sin
We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us.
Why, then, belike, we must sin
And so consequently die.
Ay, we must die an everlasting death.
What doctrine call you this? Che sera, sera?
What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu!
These metaphysics of magicians
And necromantic books are heavenly.
Ay, these are those that **Faustus** most desires.
O, what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honor and omnipotence,
Is promised to the studious artisan!
All things that move between the quiet poles
Are but obeyed in their several provinces,
But his dominion that exceeds in this
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.
A sound magician is a demigod.
Here tire my brains to gain a deity.

(Abrupt switch to dark sound studio. Reel: silent footage for frozen peas plays. Voices of [Directors] could be from the source or created by the production.)

"We know a remote farm in Lincolnshire, where Mrs. Buckley lives. Every July, peas grow there." Do you really mean that?

[Director One] Uh, yes, so in other words, I–I–I'd start half a second later.

Don't you think you really want to say "July" over the snow? Isn't that the fun of it?

[Director One] It's–if–if you can (laughs) if you can make it almost when that shot disappears, it'll make more–

I think it's so nice that—that you see a snow-covered field and say, "Every July peas grow there." "We know a remote farm in Lincolnshire, where Mrs. Buckley lives. Every July, peas grow there." We aren't even in the fields, you see? *(pause)* We're talking about them growing and she's picked them. *(clears throat)* What?

[Director One]: …In July.

I don't understand you, then. When must—what must be over for, "in July?"

[Director One] Uh, when we get out of that snowy field–

Well, I was out! We were onto a can of peas, a big dish of peas when I said, "in July."

[Director One] Oh, I'm sorry, Orson.

Yes, always. I'm always—past that!

[Director One] You are?

Yes! Wh—that's about where I say, "in July."

*[Director **Two**] Can you emphasize a bit "in?" "In July."*

Why? That doesn't make any sense. Sorry. There's no known way of saying an English sentence in which you begin a sentence with "in" and emphasize it. Get me

a jury and show me how you can say, "*in* July," and I'll… go down on you. That's just idiotic, if you'll forgive me saying so.

*[Director **Two**] (indistinct chatter)*

That's just stupid. "*In* July?" I'd love to know how you emphasize "*in*" in "*in* July…" Impossible! Meaningless!

[Director One] I think all they were thinking was that they didn't want to–

He isn't thinking.

[Director One] Orson, can we just do one last time–

Yeah.

[Director One] …And it was my fault. I should—I said "in July." If you could leave "every July"–

You didn't say it. He said it.

[Director One] …I said "every July."

Your friend. "Every July?"

[Director One] …So after this shot…

No, you don't really mean "every July?"

[Director One] …It is, but it's…

But that's—that's bad copy. It's in July. Of course it's *every* July! There's too much directing around here.

(Establish Othello in Orson lighting; Orson himself coming from exasperation...)

…By your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnished tale deliver
Of my whole course of love—what drugs, what charms,
What conjuration, and what mighty magic
(For such proceeding I am charged withal)
I won **Desdemon**.
Her father loved me, oft invited me,
Still questioned me the story of my life

From year to year—the battles, sieges, fortunes
That I have passed.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days
To th' very moment that he bade me tell it,
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances:
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hairbreadth 'scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach,
And of the cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. These things to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline.
And often did beguile her of her tears
When I did speak of some distressful stroke
That my youth suffered. My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs.
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful.
She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished
That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked me,
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.
She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have used.

(Back to the dark sound studio; reel of silent footage continues.)

[Director One] A fraction more on the–on that shoals thing, 'cause you rolled it round very nicely.

Yeah, roll it round and I have no more time. You don't know what I'm up against. Because it's full of–of–of things that are only correct because they're grammatical, but they're tough on the ear. You see, this is a very wearying one, it's unpleasant to read. Unrewarding. "Because Findus freeze the cod at sea and then add a crumb, crisp…" ooh, "Crumb, crisp coating."

[Director One] (indistinct chatter)

Ah, that's tough. "Crumb, crisp coating."

*[Director **Two**] (indistinct chatter)*

I think, no, because of the way it's written, you need to break it up because it's not—it's not as conversationally written. What?

[Director One] Take "crumb" out.

*[Director **Two**] (sounds like) That's the word.*

Take "crumb" out. Good.

(Establish Lear.)

Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies.

(Establish dark sound studio; reel of silent footage continues.)

Here under protest is, "beef burgers." "We know a little place in the American Far West, where Charlie Briggs chops up the finest prairie-fed beef and tastes…" This is a lot of shit, you know that? You want one more?

*[Director **Two**] I do, actually…*

More on "buck beef"?

[Director One] You–you missed the first "beef," actually completely.

What do you mean, missed it?

[Director One] You–you're emphasizing "prairie-fed"–

But you can't emphasize "*beef*," that's like him wanting me to emphasize "*in*" before "July." Come on, fellas, you're losing your heads! I wouldn't direct any living actor like this in Shakespeare! The way you do this, it's impossible!

[Director One] Orson, you did six last year, and by far and away the best, and I know the–the reason–

The right reading for this is the one I'm giving it!

[Director One] For the moment.

I spent… twenty times more for you people than any other commercial I've ever made. You are such pests! Now, what is it you want?

[Director One] Now, I think–

In your *depths* of your *ignorance*, what is it you want? Whatever it is you want, I can't deliver it because I just don't see it.

[Director One] That was absolutely fine, it really was.

Here, you– *(crumples script, stands up)* This isn't worth it. No money is worth this.

(bitterly) We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow.

(Trumpets sound.)

SCENE 8: THE BULL GOES HOME WITH THE BOY (CONCLUSION)

Bonito the bull is *furious*. He *refuses* to leave the ring. He understands no word of the eloquent address that pardoned him. He has won this ground in battle and will not budge. He wants to kill all the bullfighters in Spain.

They sent the cows in after him, to try to lure Bonito out of the ring. Nothing doing. He was furious. He wanted to fight and fight. He turned on the cows and the cows stampeded; panicked. There didn't seem to be any way of dealing with him.

Then—a great gasp, a shudder of fear and outrage went up in the plaza! Somehow, a *little boy* had jumped into the center of the ring!

Men turned their eyes away from the expected horror… But when they looked again, wonder of wonders, there was the little boy standing, cool and safe, beside Bonito—this phenomenon of fury, this terror among fighting bulls. And what was

the child doing? Patting the head between the frightful horns. And if they'd known it, whispering words of comfort to an old friend. Amazed, they saw Bonito nuzzle this child like a colt, then move politely after him, like a little dog, out of the ring.

And so, the two went back to their ranch together, and Bonito, according to the terms of his pardon, had many brave sons. And in the fullness of time, so did his little friend. And, since this story is perfectly true, I'm very glad to tell you that they both lived happily ever after. The End.

(Orson bows.)

To do great deeds and dream great dreams requires courage. Courage to always return to the bull, even if you've been caught, as long as you have the strength to walk. Be of good heart.

(Takes an audience member by the hand, a lady's, perhaps kisses it; holds it.)

This hand that touches you now once touched the hand of Sarah Bernhardt—can you imagine that? She had a wooden leg and she was playing vaudeville, and I was brought backstage, aged four or five, I guess, and led into a bower of dark-red roses where that marvelous old lady sat in her wheelchair, refreshing herself from a tank of oxygen. That hand I took was covered with liver spots and liquid white and with the pointy ends of her sleeves glued over the back of it. When she was young, Mademoiselle Bernhardt had taken the hand of Madame George, who had been the mistress of *Napoleon!* Now *you* are just three handshakes from *Napoleon!*

Four or five very old men could join hands and take you right back to Shakespeare. You could put all the popes since Saint Peter into a French bistro—with nobody waiting for a table. It's not that the world is so small, but that history is so short.

(Orson turns away with tears in his eyes.)

It just makes me angry. Don't you see? It's because it's the past—it's over…

(Orson puts the red handkerchief to his eyes; beat; turns to break the solemnity.)

I, ah, I heard a funny joke this morning. …A friend of Picasso showed to Picasso a painting Picasso had done. Picasso said to his friend, "That painting… is a fake." "But Picasso," said his friend, "I watched you paint this with my own eyes!" "Aha," said Picasso, "…I can paint a fake Picasso as well as anyone!"

(The shrieking cockatoo from Kane.)

It's time to say goodbye. *(smiles privately about the cockatoo[4] and quickly on)* I don't believe in explanations, and I hate symbolism; a kind of *invocation*, a kind of *signal* in a magical sense, that's my intention here, at the last, and fast; for me, almost everything's too long.

(the invocation, signal) Our dreams are full of people we've never seen; full of places we've never been, and yet—there they are. Real. There are things happening you don't know about in the next room. Richly happening. And here we are now, already in the ring and always approaching the Moment of Truth! To history yet unmade, we send our greetings! To the generations sleeping in the stars, we say, the fight is worth it!

(Orson flings up the white handkerchief. A band plays, as at the beginning.)

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen… sacred beasts. I remain, as always… obediently yours, Orson Welles.

Please let me call again.

(As Orson bows the lights go out.)

[4] "Wake 'em up… Seriously. Brighten up anyone who might be nodding off. …I'm very fond of parrots."

On The Source Materials

With very few exceptions, this text is compiled exclusively from direct quotes from (and lines written by) Orson Welles. Apart from their carefully considered selection and placement, any further interference has been kept as minimal as possible. For example, there are changed tenses, speeches abridged, and occasionally his words have been "papier-mâché-d" together from different tellings of the same stories… But the original sense and meaning of the words, to the best of my ability and understanding, has still been preserved as authentic Orson.

Acknowledgement is given with thanks and evermore thanks to the larger than life spirit of Orson Welles himself, and to the main Orson Welles' materials used to create this piece: Orson's Sketchbook; his Commentaries; speeches and interviews far and wide; and an occasional nod to Orson's dialogue in films (principally F for Fake). Special thanks are given for the beautifully indexed interviews of "This is Orson Welles" by Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich, for Wellesnet's authoritative collection of Orson Welles' materials, and not least for Wellesnet's enthusiastic permission on behalf of the Orson Welles' estate to use Orson's own words to create this piece,

Orson Welles : Sacred Beasts.

Thank you and good night,

Amanda Jane Schaar.