

Urban Myths:  
Shirley Temple vs. Orson Welles

"Sweetheart of Darkness"

written by

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PART 1

OVER BLACK.

SUPER: HOLLYWOOD, 1939

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Audio of the 1938 recording of 'War of the Worlds'.

Shots of framed newspaper headlines on the wall:

1938: WAR OF THE WORLDS CAUSES  
CHAOS

NATION IN PANIC OVER RADIO  
BROADCAST OF MARTIAN INVASION.

RADIO LISTENERS TAKE WAR DRAMA AS  
FACT

Close up on a man obscuring his face with a copy of 'Screen Guide' magazine. A picture of Shirley Temple as "Susannah of the Mounties" on the cover. A pipe sticks out over the top, bouncing as he frantically turns the pages.

He finally lowers it to reveal himself: **ORSON WELLES** (24), a real grump. He's sitting across from his agent, **ALAN** (50s). Orson's wife, **VIRGINIA** (20s), crochets on the sofa.

ORSON

Page seventeen, one measly line:  
"Orson Welles is working on a  
motion picture". That's it?

VIRGINIA

It's something, at least.

ALAN

Look, Orson, you're still new in  
Hollywood. It takes time to get  
noticed. You gotta make a few  
things first.

ORSON

Make a few things? Make a few  
things?!

(standing)

Macbeth at the Lafayette theatre in  
thirty six.

(MORE)

ORSON (CONT'D)

A production of Caesar so vigorous,  
so contemporary, that it set  
Broadway on its ear. A radio play  
evocative enough to send a nation  
into panic. Are these **things**?!

Orson is stood at full height with his arms raised to the heavens.

ALAN

You know what I mean. Movie things.

Orson sits back down with a defeated slump.

ORSON

You Californians have no respect  
for art. I don't know why I  
bothered coming here. No one even  
knows who I am.

VIRGINIA

That's not true. You were on page  
two of the The Times when we  
arrived.

ORSON

Orson Welles seen shouting "I'm  
rich! I'm rich!" out of the back of  
a Rolls Royce through Beverly  
Hills. A true personification of  
the Hollywood spectacle.

(sarcastically)

Please, put that as my epitaph.

ALAN

It was your idea.

ORSON

And it worked, didn't it?

Orson brandishes a script.

ORSON (CONT'D)

But this picture is going to speak  
for itself. We just need a studio  
to sign off.

ALAN

So, sort out your budget.

ORSON

Heart of Darkness is my magnum  
opus. I will not squabble over  
fifty thousand dollars.

ALAN  
Then cut a scene.

ORSON  
Not an option.

ALAN  
Or get more famous.

ORSON  
You're my agent, that's your job.

ALAN  
Well, lucky for you, I'm very good at it. Life Magazine has offered you a feature.

ORSON  
Finally.

ALAN  
(without missing a beat)  
But you have to share it with Shirley Temple.

VIRGINIA  
Oh I love Shirley Temple. She's so sweet and innocent. Those little dimples.

ORSON  
What? Why?

ALAN  
She lives on this street. You're neighbours. They think it'll fit.

Tortured by the thought of it, Orson takes a moment.

ORSON  
Fine. Invite her over for dinner. Virginia can make her some...what do kids eat? Twinkies?

ALAN  
Actually, Harry Brand says you've gotta go there.

ORSON  
Who is Harry Brand?

ALAN  
He's the Publicity Chief at Fox and Shirley's their biggest earner.

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

You could do well out of them too,  
if you play your cards right.  
They've suggested the two of you  
spend tomorrow afternoon together.

ORSON

What am I going to do at a little  
girl's house for an entire  
afternoon? I'm hardly going to play  
with dollies or have a tea party,  
am I?

ALAN

Not all little girls are like that,  
Orson.

ORSON

See, I don't know the first thing  
about children!

VIRGINIA

He really doesn't.

ALAN

What about your daughter?

They all turn to look at a toddler on the floor. She's  
playing with a box of matches and gumming on an empty pipe.

VIRGINIA

Exactly.

EXT. OUTSIDE ORSON'S HOUSE - DAY

Orson is wearing a full suit with a heavy coat. He and Alan  
look out as a nice car pulls up. It is conspicuously not a  
Rolls Royce.

ORSON

What is that?

ALAN

I borrowed it from a friend, but  
it's got to be back by six.

ORSON

It's not a Rolls.

ALAN

Sure, but maybe you've got two cars. They don't know. You're rich, right?

Orson thinks about it for a moment before sighing in agreement.

A woman walking her dog approaches, she squints at Orson with recognition and and gestures hello. Orson half-heartedly waves back.

ORSON

Let's go. I'm already being hounded.

They bundle into the car. It starts to drive, very slowly. Crawling along.

ORSON (CONT'D)

When we get there, you stay in the car. I'll get out and wave, that's one photograph. Then I'll greet everyone. More photographs.

As Orson goes on, the woman walking her dog can be seen through the side window passing them with a normal pace - they're going **that** slowly.

ORSON (CONT'D)

When they've finished taking those, you get out, and we'll head inside.

ALAN

(To the driver)

Ok. It's just here.

They've arrived at the house a short way down the street. They look out the window. There's no one there.

ORSON

Are you sure?

Alan checks his diary.

ALAN

(reading)

227 Rockingham Avenue. This is it.

ORSON

Are we early? Go around the block again.

The driver pulls off around the block. It only takes them a minute to get back to the house. Alan checks his watch.

ALAN

It's two thirty. Maybe we're late.

ORSON

What time were we supposed to be there?

ALAN

Two.

ORSON

Well then, we're late.

ALAN

I thought you liked to make an entrance.

ORSON

Not to an empty driveway.

Orson rolls down the window and peers out.

Still no one. It's completely silent.

ALAN

I don't know what's happened, they really should be out here waiting for yo-

Suddenly, the woman with the dog appears at the window from nowhere.

WOMAN

Excuse me.

Orson prepares himself for intrusive fandom.

ORSON

(lacklustre)  
Yes, madam?

WOMAN

Are you Cary Grant?

ORSON

No.

He rolls the window up again.

Orson thinks for a moment.

ORSON (CONT'D)  
Let's just go in.

EXT. SHIRLEY TEMPLE'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Alan and Orson head up the stairs to the house, and silently negotiate who is going to knock on the big front door. Eventually, Alan does it.

ALAN  
Remember: take it easy, be friendly, smile for the camera, and Twentieth Century Fox will be writing checks for whatever you want to make.

ORSON  
I could read fluently from the age of three. I'm sure I can impress a little girl.

Eventually a woman opens the door, it's Shirley's **MOTHER** (late 30s).

ALAN  
Mrs Temple?

MOTHER  
(Addressing Alan)  
Mr Welles, you're exactly how I imagined.

Orson pushes past her. Alan offers a hand.

ALAN  
That's Orson. I'm Alan, his agent.

He hands her a business card.

MOTHER  
(watching Orson)  
Sorry, I've only heard him on the radio.

INT. A HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Orson surveys the entryway with mild disdain. It's full of photographs of Shirley.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Can I take your coat?

ORSON  
No. I'll keep it on.

Orson stares at Shirley's tiny Oscar statuette. He couldn't be more jealous.

MOTHER  
Shirley's just through here.

He turns a corner to see **SHIRLEY** (11), seated on a sofa with a smartly dressed female **JOURNALIST** (30s).

She's so adorable she's practically glowing, her golden curls bouncing in slow motion on her dimpled cheeks.

No one notices Orson enter. The attention is all on her.

ORSON  
Hello?

A flashbulb goes off, startling Orson. We see a photographer posed behind an old-fashioned camera.

Shirley looks up, delighted.

SHIRLEY  
Orson!

She runs over and hugs him warmly around his waist. He's taken aback. She beckons at him until he bends down, almost doubling over.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)  
(Whispering, seriously)  
You're **late**.

She gives him a kiss on the cheek, and the flash bulb goes off again.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)  
(To the room)  
Who wants a tour of the garden?

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIRLEY'S GARDEN - DAY

Shirley bursts through the double doors at the back of the house with Orson in tow. She's on a mission. The journalist trots alongside them, making notes, while everyone else follows.

JOURNALIST  
So, are you two good friends?

ORSON  
Um, no.

SHIRLEY  
Oh boy, I'm a real admirer of Mr  
Welles.

JOURNALIST  
And how do you feel about Shirley's  
pictures?

ORSON  
Couldn't miss them if I tried.

ALAN  
He's a huge fan.

Orson gives Alan a glare.

SHIRLEY  
You know, I do hope we can work  
together soon.

MOTHER  
Shirley's still under contract with  
Fox.

JOURNALIST  
Fifty thousand dollars a film,  
that's what I heard.

SHIRLEY  
My mother handles all my money. I  
just like to sing and dance and  
make everyone happy.

She does a little twirl and everyone applauds. Orson rolls  
his eyes.

ALAN  
Now that's a star.

Orson rolls his eyes.

ORSON  
(under his breath)  
Yea, the *Morning Star*.

JOURNALIST

And you, Mr Welles? I hear you're in Hollywood to negotiate a contract too.

Orson shifts into presentation mode, ready to give a speech.

ORSON

Well, I've turned down a number of offers, but I'm considering signing a deal with RKO. For me, artistic integrity is key, and I intend to make a statement. Revolutionise the Hollywood game. Do things in a completely new way. When I work with my own ensemble at the Mercury Theat--

JOURNALIST

--Oh my goodness, that's so cute!

Several flash bulbs go off.

Everyone's attention turns to Shirley, who is making a small dog do tricks.

SHIRLEY

His name is Ching Ching.

JOURNALIST

Well, golly, I know that! He's gotta be one of the most famous dogs in the world. Everyone knows his name.

The dog does another trick, and everyone applauds again.

Orson clears his throat.

JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

(scribbling in her pad)

What did you say your little company was called?

ORSON

The Mercury Theatre. Beyond 'War of The Worlds' - six million people tuned in, by the way - we've also recently staged a revival of William Archer's The Green Goddess, on Broadway, and my own new work, Five Kings.

ALAN

Orson is somewhat of a prodigy.  
He's a real--

MOTHER

(Shouting)

Shirley Temple!

Shirley is kneeling on the floor, pulling a rope with her dog.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Watch your knees, they'll get  
dirty. You want to look pretty in  
the magazine!

SHIRLEY

Oh, I'm just playing at being a  
puppy, Mama.

JOURNALIST

We don't mind at all! Just do  
exactly as you usually would, and  
we'll capture it. You must be very  
used to having your photograph  
taken by now?

SHIRLEY

Oh yes, I've been in twenty studio  
pictures already.

JOURNALIST

And how many pictures have you  
made, Mr Welles?

ALAN

(interrupting)

None.

Orson shoots daggers at Alan.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Yet.

EXT. SHIRLEY'S GARDEN - DAY

Shirley and Orson sit at a tiny table, Orson is glaring at Alan. A beautiful toy tea set is laid out in front of them. Alan slips away to avoid the accusatory stare.

The photographer is setting up, and everyone else is busying themselves. Orson lights his pipe.

SHIRLEY  
You smell like an old man.

ORSON  
Thank you.

SHIRLEY  
How old are you?

ORSON  
Twenty four.

SHIRLEY  
Do you have a wife?

ORSON  
Yes.

SHIRLEY  
Does she like you?

ORSON  
Impossible to tell.

Orson wipes his brow. He's pretty sweaty, and the photographer's taking a long time.

SHIRLEY  
Aren't you hot in that coat?

He looks her up and down, she really is precocious.

ORSON  
Aren't you cold without stockings?

SHIRLEY  
I never wear stockings. I'm not allowed. It makes me look too old.

ORSON  
How old are you?

Shirley leans in conspiratorially.

SHIRLEY  
(Whispers)  
Eleven.

The journalist comes over.

JOURNALIST  
How old are you now, dear?

SHIRLEY  
Nine.

Orson frowns as Shirley smiles brightly for the camera. A bulb flashes.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Mr Welles, can you pretend to drink some tea.

ORSON  
I only drink scotch.

SHIRLEY  
You could try acting.

She raises her little cup and takes a performative sip. Her eyes lock his without blinking. Like she's challenging a bull.

Orson reluctantly joins her. As he goes to sip, the tiny chair crumbles beneath him.

A bulb flashes.

END OF PART 1

PART 2

INT. SHIRLEY'S PLAYHOUSE - DAY

Orson enters Shirley's playhouse, which is filled with film posters, magazine covers and, most importantly: a lot of creepy dolls. He shudders.

Suddenly, he feels a tap on his shoulder and turns around, only to find himself face to face with a particularly large and uncanny doll, held up by Shirley.

ORSON  
(Startled)  
DAMN IT.

Shirley giggles hysterically as a bulb flashes. The journalist clutches her pad.

JOURNALIST  
Are you afraid of dolls, Mr Welles?

ORSON  
(Irritated)  
Of course I'm not afraid of dolls.

Over the journalist's shoulder he narrows his eyes at Shirley. She quickly sticks her tongue out at him, before snapping back to an adorable smile.

MOTHER  
Now, they're not all Shirley dolls.  
I mean, dolls **of** Shirley. Some of  
them were just sent to her from her  
fans around the world.

SHIRLEY  
I love all my dollies, but  
'specially the ones that were gifts  
from little children, just like me.

JOURNALIST  
Can you show me some of your  
favourites?

Shirley takes the journalist to see the dolls she likes best. Orson pulls Alan aside and speaks in hushed tones.

ORSON  
She's toying with me.

ALAN  
Who?

ORSON

The girl.

ALAN

You're kidding, right?

ORSON

Surely you see it? She's trying to assert dominion over me at every opportunity. Assassinate my character before I even have a chance to make a picture. She's an ego-maniac. A monster. You can't let her make me hold a dolly.

ALAN

Orson, she's nine years old.

ORSON

She's **ELEVEN**.

Seeing how manically serious Orson is, Alan considers this.

ALAN

Fine. If it means that much to you. I'll have a word.

Alan heads over to talk to the journalist, while Orson tries to calm himself down. He returns after a quick chat.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Ok. One photograph with a dolly, and we can go outside.

ORSON

No. No dollies.

ALAN

Alright. How about no dollies, but a couple with the ponies?

ORSON

Ponies?

CUT TO:

EXT. A FIELD - DAY

Orson and Shirley stand next to two miniature ponies, as everyone else looks on. A defeated misery in Orson's eyes as he towers over the ridiculous animals.

SHIRLEY

This is Spunky, and this is Little  
Carnation.

(To Orson)

Which one do you want to ride?

ORSON

Neither. I don't feel like killing  
a small horse today.

SHIRLEY

I ride them them all the time.

ORSON

Good for you.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Orson, could you give Spunky a  
little pat on the nose?

Orson tentatively tries to touch Spunky's nose, but the horse  
snorts aggressively.

SHIRLEY

He doesn't like you.

ORSON

The feeling is mutual.

A flash of a bulb.

EXT - SHIRLEY'S GARDEN - DAY

Orson is stood off to the side with the journalist. Shirley  
pulls a series of well-practiced poses for the camera.

ORSON (CONT'D)

I don't feel comfortable with any  
of these photographs. They don't  
exactly represent me: who I am as a  
creator. I'm trying to produce a  
groundbreaking picture that  
captures the savagery of humanity  
under deep psychological pressure,  
you see?

JOURNALIST

So, you want to do something...less  
delightful?

ORSON

Exactly.

Orson stares meaningfully into the middle-distance as Shirley tap dances through the back of the scene.

MOTHER

(overhearing)

I've got an idea! Shirley, why don't you ask Mr Welles if he'd like to play croquet? And I'll go and fetch some lemonade.

ALAN

I'll help.

(As they walk away)

Tell me: who is Shirley's agent, because I've got capacity, and she'd have my full attention.

Shirley points at a croquet pitch, set up on the lawn.

SHIRLEY

It's all set up, right over there.

JOURNALIST

Perfect!

(To the photographer)

We'll stay here and get a long shot. That's funny, a long shot, like in croquet.

(To Orson)

You can have that, if you like.

ORSON

No, please. It's yours.

JOURNALIST

Shirley, tell me: do you enjoy games?

SHIRLEY

Oh, very much.

(looking directly at Orson)

And I **always** win.

Orson looks around for Alan, hoping he's seen this too. He didn't. He's off talking himself up to Shirley's mother.

Orson sighs and makes his way over to the lawn.

EXT. CROQUET PITCH - DAY

Shirley and Orson stand with their mallets at the starting point of the croquet pitch. They are out of earshot of everyone else.

SHIRLEY

Now play properly. I don't like to pretend.

ORSON

You could have fooled me.

Shirley hits a perfect pitch through the first hoop. She gives Orson a sly look before standing to the side, awaiting his shot.

Orson readies his aim. As he goes to take the shot, Shirley interrupts.

SHIRLEY

What picture are you trying to make?

She's timing her questions to throw off his game.

Orson takes a moment, lines up again and matches hers; another excellent shot. They saunter over to the balls.

ORSON

(smug)

A classic. Conrad's Heart of Darkness.

Shirley shrugs.

SHIRLEY

I've never heard of it.

JOURNALIST

(Shouting from a distance)

Smile! Are you having fun?

Both Orson and Shirley stop and wave for the cameras.

Shirley lines up, biting her lip in concentration.

ORSON

Maybe you haven't heard of it because it's for grown ups.

(leaning in)

And you're just a child.

His distraction didn't work. She hits a perfect shot through the next hoop. He curses wordlessly.

SHIRLEY

I know about a lot of grown up things.

Orson lines up his shot.

ORSON

Oh really? Did you hear my radio show? About the Martians?

SHIRLEY

Yes. I turned it on by accident.

ORSON

And you thought it was all real?

SHIRLEY

Oh, no. I knew it wasn't true.

Orson takes his shot but is thrown off by the comment. It's not great.

ORSON

How did you know?

SHIRLEY

If men from mars had come here, why would your program be the only one broadcasting the news?

ORSON

A lot of people believed it.

SHIRLEY

Well, they're silly.

Shirley takes another shot.

ORSON

It was pretty convincing. We did it in a very clever way.

SHIRLEY

I don't fall for anything. I stopped believing in Santa Claus when my mother took me to the mall to see him, and he asked me for my autograph.

Orson takes a shot.

ORSON  
Do you like being famous?

SHIRLEY  
Sure.

Shirley takes another shot.

ORSON  
Are you going to ask me if I like  
being famous?

SHIRLEY  
If I see you again when you are.

Orson takes a shot, but it misses. Orson starts to lose his temper, bending down close to Shirley.

ORSON  
Dammit. You know what: I'm a big  
deal in the theatre. The biggest  
deal in America. I've been on  
Broadway. Have you been on  
Broadway? I don't think so--

MOTHER  
Mr Welles.

Orson turns around to find Shirley's mother directly behind him.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Lemonade?

Orson takes a glass from the tray.

ORSON  
Thank you.

JOURNALIST  
We're going to get some more flash  
bulbs from the car.

The journalist and photographer pick up their kit and head out.

ORSON  
We can stop now.

SHIRLEY  
I want to carry on playing.

MOTHER

Shirley. Perhaps Mr Welles is feeling tired.

ORSON

I'm not tired.

Shirley takes a glass. They both glug down the entire thing, let out a satisfied gasp, wipe their mouths on their sleeve, and place the glasses back on the tray. Perfectly in sync.

MOTHER

Who's winning then?

ALAN

I bet Shirley is.

SHIRLEY

Oh no, it's very close.

ALAN

Is that so? Well, I'm sure you'll get ahead soon. Right, Orson?

The journalist and photographer return. Shirley's mother goes over to them with lemonade.

SHIRLEY

Guess I'd better take my shot.

She heads over to her ball.

ALAN

Orson, let the little girl win. It won't look good if you don't.

Orson is ignoring him. Observing the situation that surrounds him, thinking.

ALAN (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

Orson puts his mallet over his shoulder.

ORSON

Heading up the Congo River.

On that, Orson marches straight towards his ball.

He stops in front of Shirley, looks her dead in the eyes with determination and takes his shot. It's perfect. He poses for the camera. The game is on.

The pair battle. Taking shot after shot. Pose after pose. Going from frustrated to celebratory and back until...finally...they reach end game.

It's Orson's shot. The final shot. And he's got a clear line. It's in the bag.

SHIRLEY

Go on then. Let's finish this *game*.

Orson strides up to the his ball. He lines up the shot with laser focus. It's a guaranteed win.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Come on. Do it. Get your win.

He looks up at the cameras snapping frantically - to Alan looking horrified - then back to Shirley.

ORSON

Oh, I will.

Orson purposefully hits it off to the side - ending the game by handing the victory to Shirley.

Shirley throws her mallet on the ground and storms up to him.

SHIRLEY

You did that on purpose!

ORSON

(smug)

No, I didn't. You're the winner.

SHIRLEY

It doesn't count. You didn't try. You're a big baby!

Orson is taken aback.

ORSON

Well...you're a big baby too.

SHIRLEY

Don't you call me a big baby when I called you a big baby first.

ORSON

I'll call you a big baby if I want to call you a big baby. You're a big baby with big dollies and ridiculous tiny horses.

SHIRLEY  
I'm going to cry.

ORSON  
Go ahead.

SHIRLEY  
I will. I can do it. I practice.

ORSON  
Go on then. Let's see you cry.  
Maybe I'll cry too.

SHIRLEY  
Go on then.

ORSON  
Fine.

SHIRLEY  
Fine.

ORSON  
Fine.

The pair both try to bring themselves to tears. Squeezing and contorting their faces to make themselves cry.

Suddenly, the journalist appears directly behind them.

JOURNALIST  
Everyone okay?

They both turn and smile brightly: a perfect picture. The flash bulb goes off.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Everyone is gathering up their things, ready to leave.

JOURNALIST  
I think we've got plenty there.  
It's going to be a great spread.  
(To Orson)  
I bet you didn't think you'd ever  
be in a magazine with Shirley  
Temple!

ORSON  
No. No, I did not.

MOTHER

Before you go, you must sign  
Shirley's guest book.

She hands Orson a pen. He thinks for a moment, and then writes his message.

ALAN

Thank you. We've had a fantastic  
time. Haven't we Orson?

ORSON

Oh, yes. It's been, um...

He's lost for words. This has never, ever happened before.

SHIRLEY

A day to remember.

She looks directly at Orson.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

(Seriously)

Forever.

Shirley's lips peel back into a toothy, creepy smile.

Everyone chuckles, except Orson. Alan holds open the front door.

ALAN

She's adorable! Right. Shall we get  
in the car? In YOUR car.

(To everyone)

He's got a Rolls Royce as well.

ORSON

I think I'll walk.

Orson steps out into the brilliant LA sunshine, still in his heavy winter coat.

INT. ORSON'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Virginia hangs a copy of the photo of Orson and Shirley Temple on the wall, next to the newspaper clippings of War of the Worlds.

Orson walks up to it. Looks at it proudly as another of his great achievements - then takes it down immediately and throws it into the trash.

INT. A HALLWAY - DAY

We scan over Shirley's guest book. There, after a few other famous names, it reads "From one champion to another. Best, Orson Welles".

FADE TO BLACK

END OF PART 2

PROLOGUE

OVER BLACK.

SUPER 1: Orson Welles didn't make his 'Heart of Darkness'. He wouldn't compromise on the budget. Instead, he went on to make another film by the name of 'Citizen Kane'.

SUPER 2: Shirley Temple retired from acting at the age of 22 and went on to become a highly-respected US diplomat.

SUPER 3: Reports suggest they never played croquet again.