

TP-4 Overworked and Underpaid: Labour Dispute in Fairytale Land

Cast: 25 Characters

**Mama Bear
Papa Bear
Baby Bear
Puss In Boots
Witch
Wolf
Troll
Pirate
Dragon
Ogre
Goldilocks
Red Riding Hood
Granny
Pig # 1, 2, & 3
Robin Hood
Sleeping Beauty
Frog Prince
Servant # 1, 2, 3, & 4
King
Mother Goose**

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Scene 1 (The Bears' Bomb Shelter)

Mama Bear: Wow, that dinner was delicious. A little too hot, though. Better lay off the chili peppers next time. We need to ration them – we don't want to deplete our provisions too drastically.

Papa Bear: With all the food we have stored, we're set until Baby Bear is ready for college. There's no danger of running short. And if you want less spice, then make dinner yourself. That food was too mild for me.

Baby Bear: I liked it.

(Papa Bear sits down and finds a long blonde hair on his armchair.)

Papa Bear: Ugh, a golden hair on my armchair. Are we ever going to get rid of them? I found one stuck between my teeth yesterday.

Mama Bear: At least we won't have any more intruders, now that we've moved into our wonderful underground bomb shelter.

Papa Bear: Ah, yes. One year, five months, nine days, seventeen hours...and counting...of undisturbed peace and quiet. No more flippant blonde vagabonds stealing the food from our baby's mouth and breaking our most prized possessions.

Baby Bear: No one except me will ever sleep in my bed again.

(Little Red Riding Hood skips past and throws a newspaper in the bears' mail tube.)

Papa Bear: Oh look. Here's the paper. The mail tube must be working again. *(Papa Bear begins reading the newspaper.)* Scandalous! Look at this, Mama Bear. There they are again, front-page news. I'm so tired of seeing that warty old witch's face, and her heathen henchmen aren't much better. Did anyone notice when our home was brutally invaded? No. Did anyone come to interview us? Of course not. Newspapers! What are they good for? The fire, that's what.

(Papa Bear tears the paper up, stomps on it, and throws it into the fire before Mama Bear can stop him.)

Mama Bear: Papa Bear, calm down. You shouldn't get so worked up over these things.

Papa Bear: Those evil characters just make me so mad sometimes.

Mama Bear: I know, but I wanted to read that article. It's important to stay informed about the outside world. *(Mama Bear looks at the shreds of torn paper.)* I guess I'll have to watch the news instead. I'll turn on the television, unless anyone objects. *(Papa Bear grumbles.)* I didn't think so.

(Mama Bear turns on the TV, and the scene shows what the bears are watching. A witch and her supporters are protesting on the palace steps. They are holding signs that say things like, "Equal representation for ALL story characters," and, "Have you hugged a troll today?" and, "Ogres have feelings too!")

Puss In Boots: *(talking into a microphone, looking out into the audience)* I'm Puss In Boots for FTTV, with a special report live from the royal palace where protesters are still clogging the steps, demanding that the king adhere to their demands. It has been four weeks since the witches, trolls, ogres, wolves, and dragons have refused to appear in their customary places in the fairytale hierarchy. All trade in storytelling has been put on hold until one side or the other gives in. It is unclear how long the strike will last. I'm here with the Wicked Witch, self-appointed leader of the cabal. Witch, what do you have to tell the viewing public?

Witch: I want to make it clear to the fairytale community at large that we will never give up until our demands are met. Your stories, and the stories of your descendants, will never be completed unless we are allowed our rightful places within storytelling tradition.

Puss In Boots: And what are your demands?

Witch: We have prepared a list of claims against this empire. *(The Witch reaches into a file folder that she is carrying.)* The first item regards.... Where is the list? It was supposed to be at the front of this file folder. *(She turns to the Wolf.)* Wolf, where is that list?

Wolf: I don't know boss. Shorty here was supposed to take care of it. *(The Wolf points to the Troll.)*

Troll: Hey! I'm not short. I just have bad posture.

Pirate: Yaar, there was once a time when my shipmates and I would have cracked your hunched-over bones. Yaar, those were the good old days.

Wolf: Hey, big guy. You got that list, or did you eat it?

Dragon: Oh, that's right, blame the dragon. Something is missing, so it must be the dragon's fault. A princess disappears, and who do they condemn? The dragon, of course. No one trusts the dragon. Just because I happen to enjoy burning villages and devouring townspeople, I get no respect. It isn't fair. It isn't right...

Witch: Are you finished? Ogre, do you know where the list is?

Ogre: What? Are you talking to me?

Witch: Yes. Have you seen the list?

Ogre: What? Clean my wrist? Why?

Witch: List. I need the list.

Ogre: Oh, the list. *(The Ogre takes the list out of his ear.)* I knew it was important so I put it in my ear to keep it safe. *(The Ogre passes the list to the Witch.)*

Witch: *(smoothing out the list)* Well, it might be a little difficult to read through the earwax, but it's the only copy we have. Our first demand is that the workload for evil fairytale characters be reduced to a reasonable amount. Every fairytale has a villain who is a witch, a wolf, an ogre, a dragon, or a troll.

Pirate: Or a pirate, ye bloated windbag.

Witch: Who's doing the talking here, Peg Leg? Me. I put in eighteen-hour days rushing from Rapunzel to Snow White to those little brats Hansel and Gretel to whichever law-abiding citizen needs abducting next. We deserve some leisure time just like everyone else. For once I'd like to see a princess kidnap another princess. If I have to turn one more prince into a frog, my wand is going to spontaneously combust. And for the record, I am so sick of children stew.

Puss In Boots: Do you have any other requests?

Witch: Yes, we insist that the evil characters be subsidized for the employment-related purchases they regularly make, such as broomsticks, caves, cauldrons, and claw-care kits. If we are going to expose our possessions to such hazards, we should get some kind of compensation. And on that note, we move to our third item. Evil doing is a very dangerous occupation. It is only natural that we should be given insurance packages to cover our medical and dental care, home maintenance, theft, and fire.

Pirate: Yaar, and flooding.

(Goldilocks enters and the bears gasp.)

Goldilocks: Oh good, the cameras are still here. *(Goldilocks starts looking through her pockets for her script.)*

Mama Bear: How did she get out of jail?

Papa Bear: They granted her parole, remember? It just goes to show that the justice system is completely ineffective.

Goldilocks: *(grabs Puss In Boot's microphone)* Here, I have my script prepared. *(Goldilocks reads from the script.)* After I broke into The Three Bears' home, there was simply no excitement left for me in the life of a goody-goody little girl. I had my first taste of mutiny, and I liked it.

Pirate: Mutiny, yaar. I know all about mutiny. In the good old days, we spiced our soup and sweetened our tea with mutiny. Mutiny was my middle name. It was the name of our ship. Also, it's the name of my cruel and dangerous parrot.

Goldilocks: That is very interesting, but it's my life they want to hear about.

Witch: Put a sock in it, Goldie, or I'll turn your pretty eyelashes into spiders. *(Goldilocks pouts and Puss In Boots takes back the microphone. The Witch turns back to Puss In Boots.)* I'm sure you understand the burden of our position.

Puss In Boots: Yes, of course. Thank you very much for your commentary. This is Puss In Boots for FTTV. Now, back to the station with...

Witch: Hold it right there. We're not done, kitty cat. We have one final policy. We insist that a series of distinctions be granted to the evil community. We want Halloween to become a statutory holiday, an annual evil prize to recognize the most diabolical among us, a prime-time sitcom, a two-week paid vacation, and a park named in our honour. Grant us our commands, citizens of Fairytale Land, or face the dire consequences.

(The evil characters break into diabolical laughter as they resume picketing.)

Puss In Boots: We've already suffered some of the consequences of the evil characters' wrath. The economy has ground to a halt without the villains' participation in our stories. If diplomacy fails, what will happen next? This is Puss In Boots for FTTV. Now we really will

return to the station with some remarks from a group of spokes-characters selected on behalf of the community of good.

(The good characters enter, including Red Riding Hood, Granny, Pigs, Robin Hood, and Sleeping Beauty. They address the audience as if they are reporting from a television station.)

Red Riding Hood: I'm speaking on behalf of myself and my grandmother when I say that we must stand united against this uprising. Wolves should not be permitted to run about, free to feast on grannies for their own pleasure, never mind being given insurance for it.

Granny: You tell them, Red. My hip is still out of joint ever since that wolf kicked me out of bed and stole my nightgown. That wolf needs to be taught some manners.

Pig # 1: We agree with Red's assessment of the situation.

Pig # 2: We have all lost friends to the wolf's insatiable appetite.

Pig # 3: That wolf won't get any insurance from us.

Pig # 1, 2, & 3: Not by the hair of our chinny, chin, chins.

Pig # 1: He can huff and puff all he wants.

Robin Hood: That's right, evil characters. We know how to handle your kind in my neck of the woods. So you'd better stay clear of Sherwood Forest, or my Merry Men will use you for target practice.

Sleeping Beauty: *(yawning between words)* I think...that we should make them go away...somehow. I'm so tired of their complaining...and whining...and cackling.... A person can't get any sleep around here.

(Sleeping Beauty falls asleep and starts snoring. The Frog Prince enters.)

Frog Prince: *(to everyone)* Well, here I am. What were your other two wishes? *(The Frog Prince walks over to Red Riding Hood.)* Hey, how you doing, darling? What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this? Would you care to help out a poor frog? Just a little kiss? *(The Frog Prince puckers his lips.)*

Red Riding Hood: Um, I'm not a princess.

(The Frog Prince looks at Granny.)

Granny: And neither am I, sonny.

Frog Prince: Oh terribly sorry. *(The Frog Prince walks over to The Three Pigs.)* Hello. I'm Mr. Right. Someone said you were looking for me.

Pig # 1, 2, & 3: *(all pointing to Sleeping Beauty)* Over there, Romeo.

Frog Prince: Right. *(The Frog Prince approaches Sleeping Beauty who is still snoring.)* How you doing, sweetheart? Your lips look so lonely. Would they like to meet mine? *(Sleeping Beauty snores louder.)* Okay, let's try – I'm a thief, and I'm here to steal your heart. *(The sound of Sleeping Beauty's snoring escalates again.)* Do you believe in love at first sight, or should I walk by again?

(Servants enter.)

Servant # 1: Make way...

Servant # 2: Make way for the king.

Servant # 3: Presenting his Royal Highness.

Servant # 4: All hail the king.

(The king enters and everyone bows.)

King: Ahem. I have a royal announcement. I, King of Fairytale Land, declare that this strike is a complete downer. Ever since those radical socialists went on strike, I've been unable to sit in my counting house and count my money. Their chanting and pacing makes me lose track of where I am. What is up with this evil labour union disrupting my thriving little kingdom? Those evil characters terrorize my faithful subjects and now they want to be compensated. Who do they think they are anyway?

Red Riding Hood: Excuse me, Your Majesty. We are also disheartened by this event, but what are you going to do about it?