

Story Conference

on

SEQUENCE 3A - SHOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMAN IN THE WOODS

Meeting held: Saturday, June 27, 1936 8:45 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

Present were: Walt  
Frank Churchill  
Charles Philippi  
Bob Kuwahara  
Joe Grant  
Bill Cottrell  
Larry Morey

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Larry went through the continuity while Frank played the musical score for this sequence.

WALT: I feel that what Snow White says to the little bird should have a double meaning such as, "ARE YOU A LITTLE ORPHAN?" In other words, have the conversation with more contact to her present predicament. She should not be conscious of it - could say, "ARE YOU AFRAID" - foreshadowing what is coming.

It should be a little baby bird to parallel her own situation which her dialogue would plant. I felt that maybe there was value in building with her to the point where the little bird is sick. Snow White is with this little bird - she is stooped over which gives you a swell position for the knife in the back. Let the menace come in there while she is still with the bird - just at that point with some connection there where she kissed the bird and the bird perked up and flew away - it has a connection for the Huntsman to soften. It would be tying it together. Maybe instead of expressing musically the menace you ought to stay with her and let the menace come in.

Larry: You can take the theme we have established with her and use that in a menacing way when the Huntsman comes in.

Frank, can't the theme of the Huntsman work against the other?

FRANK: Yes.

WALT: I was just wondering if it wouldn't be more effective musically. You see, it gives you a better chance for the connection - the Huntsman comes along - he is a threat all during the thing - and Snow White is there with little bird, which is very innocent - such a sweet person as she to have picked up a little bird and then someone going to knife her. Get the contrast in there.

CHARLIE: The little bird could start chattering and fly away and that could give her a reason to turn around.

WALT: That is too direct. I want the thought where she has kissed the bird and the Huntsman softens ~ that is a good contrast.

LARRY: What do you think could be wrong with the bird - that he is lost, but nothing definitely wrong? Outside of a sick look, there wouldn't be a broken wing or anything would there?

WALT: No. It might be that he is just lost.

- WALT: It might not hurt to parallel her own situation that might come later where she tells him to buck up. The little bird could be lost, sort of like a little kid who is lost.
- LARRY: He could be asked - "ARE YOU AN ORPHAN?" - and the bird could whistle back.
- WALT: Get a little baby bird idea there. The only thing I saw in that, it is innocent, paralleling her own situation - she isn't conscious of it.
- CHARLIE: I don't see how you are going to show how the Huntsman loses his nerve.
- WALT: That is what we want to build. A shot of bird flying away and the knife is right over back and just as she watches the bird go away - the knife drops and shadow drops right behind her and as she turns on around and looks, he immediately pleads with her. That would be better than a long bunch of dialogue. She would ask short questions - and he would answer with short answers.
- LARRY: Is that the right thought - he would say things in short phrases and broken up by her?
- WALT: Yes.
- You have your menace planted after the Queen gives the Huntsman instructions to kill Snow White and right away it parallels the situation.
- CHARLIE: Would the rhythm of the music match the rhythm of the foot steps?
- WALT: The moment she gives the Huntsman to kill Snow White we fade out and fade in on the thing being carried out - make it move faster.
- BOB: Its a good tie-up - from the Huntsman being ordered to kill her and dissolve from that to the close up of horse's legs and possibly Snow White tramping along.
- Walt: You have your set-up there - the morning sun and Snow White dressed in her prettiest dress and being taken into the woods.
- I was trying to move that part of the story and get the thing running in one reel, and yet have it rather dramatic, but have it roll right along. In other words, our titles would bridge a lot there. It opens ONCE UPON A TIME - just as if you are going to read the book and builds right up where we are going to start our action and it saves a lot of explanation.
- When we pick up with Snow White picking flowers and the Huntsman, you know what to expect - you know that he is to kill her. We won't let the Huntsman weaken any time before the time he drops the knife. He doesn't say a word when the Queen talks to him. Get shots of Huntsmen with a menacing face. When the Queen says KILL HER the Huntsman's face brightens up as though he wants to do it.
- CHARLIE: Don't you think you ought to see him open his knife?
- WALT: Yes, he could just grab at his knife when the Queen tells him to kill her.
- LARRY: We fade in first on Snow White picking flowers and Huntsman in the background. Then, cut to closer shot of her with bird where she is asking him WHAT IS THE MATTER, ARE YOU AN ORPHAN and she feels sorry for him - then we cut to Huntsman where we see him draw knife and starting forward - then cut back to S.W. trying to console the bird - then cut to the Huntsman's feet drawing nearer to her - then cut back to her and the Huntsman comes in with the knife and he moves closer and she is kissing the bird and the bird flies away - then to a longer shot where Huntsman starts to draw the knife.
- WALT: Yes, that is how I see it for the rough continuity.
- I would see his shadow at her. Get the menace of the shadow there. I saw maybe just a shot of the feet and hear the crunching of the leaves and twigs.

- WALT: By the time the Huntsman started I saw morning sunlight streaming in through the trees - that would be at his back, and the two horses just there gazing.
- At the start I would rather see the Huntsman in shadow.
- JOE: I thought he could pull his cowl and just see his eyes.
- WALT: That is mostly for those people up for public execution.
- Always keep him in shadow for a reason like he is menacing.
- LARRY: Snow White could ask the question, WHY IS HE GOING TO KILL HER.
- WALT: I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY - WHY SHOULD THE QUEEN WANT TO KILL ME - the Huntsman wouldn't let her finish - cut in on sentences.
- CHARLIE: I can't feel it is very dramatic when the Huntsman softens and doesn't kill her. I can't get the connection of it being dramatic. A fellow like the Huntsman who is sent out on a job should do it - a fellow like that wouldn't confess that he couldn't do it.
- LARRY: What we are really trying to put over is that the sweetness and goodness of Snow White defeats the Huntsman's menacing doings.
- WALT: That is just what I had seen of the thing. Let her dialogue, while she is talking to the little bird, plant it so that it is paralleling her own situation that she is a little orphan.
- FRANK: I wouldn't have the bird sick - it would be better were he just lost.
- WALT: I don't see that it is sick, but just like a little kid who is lost and is frightened, crying, etc.
- We could do without the bird entirely - she could be busy picking flowers when the Huntsman approaches. She could get up and the Huntsman is ready to stab her and then he drops down I CAN'T DO IT - I CAN'T DO IT.
- LARRY: Don't you think the little bird builds that stronger?
- WALT: I thought I did, but I was just saying maybe we could speed the whole thing up, or, maybe there is a better way we can do it. Maybe we don't need this situation here at all.
- BILL: Have you planned any way how the Huntsman gets the heart from the swine?
- WALT: The mirror discloses it.
- LARRY: Does that bird getting well seen too subtle to you - as a reason to stop the Huntsman.
- BILL: No, I can see it working in a way - it has been done before with Wallace Beery and it can be done again, but it all depends on what the feeling and personality would be.
- LARRY: Do you feel this way - he drops his knife and says I CAN'T DO IT - I CAN'T KILL SOMEONE WHO IS SO GOOD or something along that line?
- WALT: You mean - I have been an old so-and-so, but I can't kill you - it would be like plunking a knife into my own child's back - . But we can't get too involved with the dialogue.
- LARRY: He could say I CAN'T DO IT.
- BILL: You could have her escape.
- WALT: There would be no explanation for her doing that.

BILL: It could be just a fear of pursuit.

LARRY: But, she has to know that the Queen wants to kill her, as she tells the Dwarfs later.

WALT: There should be something he says so Snow White could say WHY SHOULD SHE WANT TO KILL ME or WHO WANTED YOU TO KILL ME. He could say GO - GO FOR YOUR OWN SAKE AND FOR THE SALES OF THOSE WHO LOVE YOU. I don't think it should be just for her own sake, but for the sake of others.

BILL: Didn't you talk of one time where the Huntsman is being told by the Queen if he didn't kill Snow White - there would be something done to him, and if he doesn't go through with it, it is his own neck - you might not have such a menace, but you won't have the suspense of whether he is going to kill her or not.

WALT: I don't think we should dwell on that too much. He thinks of her and he will take care of himself - he will do something to satisfy her - she will never know that Snow White is dead, the Huntsman won't let her know.

I saw it moving pretty fast ~ that is, not taking too much footage for it.

LARRY: We are just building into the woods, isn't that the way you feel about the sequence?

WALT: Yes. In the preceding sequence it is just a fade out ahead where the Queen has made the plans - we fade into this sequence where she is picking flowers and build right on up.

CHARLIE: Snow WHITE won't know that the Queen wants her killed?

WALT: She has to know that because she tells the Dwarfs later that the Queen wishes to kill her. I feel that that stuff can be put over from the animation angle, and it will be more dramatic if we used shadows and feet on the Huntsman - when you get to faces you lose imagination.

BILL: Didn't you talk one time that Snow White saw him coming toward her with a knife and she screams and asks him why he is going to kill her and he explains why?

WALT: I would like to see the Huntsman listen.

JOE: She screamed and stopped him.

WALT: We talked once of Snow White talking to the Huntsman saying how pretty the flowers were and how marvelous it was to be out and enjoy the beauties of nature.

BILL: One thing, if you build up the Huntsmen as a tough guy, who is drooling at the mouth when the Queen tells him to cut Snow White's heart out - it may be pretty hard to put over why he weakens. You will have to put over the explanation and the time is so short.

WALT: I wouldn't stumble around with it, but make it very direct. When he does weaken, he actually weakens. It is possible that anyone would.

I saw him drop down and kiss her skirt, because after all he is supposed to be a humble servant.

LARRY: It would be the kissing of the bird that would make him weaken.

BILL: Or, maybe, it might be something she said that would stop him from doing it. Yes, I think so, too. The right line might justify him dropping the knife. It is a question whether a line would be better anyway than seeing the bird there. What we are trying to put over is that her goodness is so outstanding

- LARRY: (cont'd.) that the Huntsman can't kill her.
- WALT: She could be singing to the bird HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN LOVE. Something where she is talking about love.
- LARRY: In that case if the Huntsman hears her he would have to be closer wouldn't he?
- WALT: While she is picking the flowers she could say something about love - so the whole thing could be about love. That is in her mind from the day before where the Prince came to woo her.
- LARRY: Do you think it is strong enough dramatically to see his feet coming toward her and building it stronger his approach to her than have him close to her?
- WALT: She could say something sweet to the bird - something with a sweet thought behind it, like NO ONE WILL HURT YOU - YOU HAVE NO REASON TO BE AFRAID - PUT YOUR CHIN UP and she could push little bird's chin up. She could kiss it. All the time she is doing that talking to the bird here is the menace approaching - it's a counter to the thing.
- We could work in birds generally there singing.
- LARRY: It would be better to save them for the woods.
- WALT: Yes, but I say there are birds and she sees just this one little bird, maybe, with his foot caught in a twig or something and is held there and she helps the little bird along.
- LARRY: Did you see them working in connection of stopping the Huntsman in some way?
- WALT: It would be a build up similar to this other. I think when he gets up with knife and then collapses he says, I CAN'T DO IT, and she says, CAN'T DO WHAT? Snow White would be startled. If he could collapse off his own accord it would be sudden and dramatic. It is a certain suspense, they don't know whether he is going to stab her or not.
- LARRY: That seems like the strongest way to me.
- WALT: I think that if the business seemed all right and the idea of him collapsing and can't go on would be the best way.
- CHARLIE: I think it would be a stronger picture if she just turns around and sees the knife over her. It would be more dramatic and then he turns.
- LARRY: It would be harder to justify the turning. The other way seems to be better - because you would have to fool around and stall a little. I think it would be better if he dropped the knife when her back is turned.
- WALT: Snow White would be cutting in. It is one of those things GO NOW, DON'T ASK SO MANY QUESTIONS - GO WHILE HE IS STILL IN THE MOOD. Something that would make her get up and run away from him. She doesn't know what it is all about, but she has just a vague idea that the Queen would kill her. That is what she finds out from him.
- BOB: Don't you think you could show a better reaction on him instead of shadow - that you actually did show his reaction when he drops the knife?
- WALT: I thought it had some value to have the knife drop close to her. When she comes up after the sound of the knife drop, he goes right down and grabs her skirt.
- BOB: I think it would be better to show the reaction on him - that he was actually going to stab her and then see his reaction of his change of heart.

- LARRY: Then you have to stop and stall to do that. You want to be more direct - the knife drops and then the present situation. It would be more dramatic if you didn't see him falter and then drop it.
- WALT: I was worried about the change of expression to a new attitude - even actors in pictures changing attitudes is a very difficult thing to do.
- BOB: I saw a back view of him just over her, then that pause possibly.
- WALT: When the knife drops he could drop and plead with her to forgive him and she answers FORGIVE YOU WHAT.
- I think we should have a name for him. We once suggested Humbert. Dick had a name for the queen -
- The Queen uses that name when she talks to him HUMBERT MY FAITHFUL.
- LARRY: I think you need a name in the sequence of the QUEEN AND THE HUNTSMAN instead of here.
- WALT: Describe the setting of the scene - don't describe it in detail, but just the thought that Snow White is to be picking flowers - so that when you open on the set-up here there is a menace right off the bat - no question at all, and even if you just cut to a shot of the Huntsmen there is a menace there with just his eyes looking.
- What I see there - she is trying to help the little bird and then the Huntsman starts to come to her with knife and you cut to Huntsman as he pulls knife out and have a slow walk on him out of the scene - that is the last you see of Huntsman, except his feet approaching. While she is talking to the little bird and saying things to cheer it up, here comes the feet slow with a hesitating step - it could be a kind of step that is trying to be light.
- LARRY: Would you see the shadows on the ground?
- WALT: Yes, but the shadows are so that they carry through. She is there with little bird and right behind comes the shadow - build up the shadow and knife, and as it gets set cut to her and she kisses little bird and it flies away - then we cut back to knife over her and it begins to shake, hand opens and knife drops. Maybe he could drop down right in the scene, and she takes it and he says FORGIVE ME YOUR HIGHNESS. Snow White is up there like she can't understand it WHY, HUMBERT? WHAT IS IT? And Humbert could say I COULDN'T DO IT YOUR HIGHNESS - S.W. says, WHAT? - Humbert: I CAN'T KILL YOU FOR HER - S.W. says WHO - Humbert says, THE QUEEN, THE QUEEN, GO GO GO AND NEVER RETURN TO THE CASTLE FOR THE SAKE OF NOT ONLY YOURSELF, BUT FOR THOSE YOU LOVE, DON'T RETURN. Maybe he could end up with GO GO GO. She is confused and runs off maybe cut back to a shot of him in a break-down quiver position at the last. Get a shot of the woods and she doesn't know what to do, but just goes on, hesitation at the beginning, but goes on deeper and deeper - maybe you could carry that SALLY SALLY idea of KILL YOU - WHO? - THE QUEEN - building in the little things the Huntsman said to her. And always that GO GO GO when she stops.
- The dialogue that would send her would be GO GO GO. DON'T ASK QUESTIONS CHILD, GO GO GO.
- I would see her go toward the woods and then cut into the woods, rather than running into it.

WALT: Sizing the whole thing up - do you think that, generally, we are on the right track for a thing like this, or do you think it is too heavy?

BILL: No, I think it is on the right track. I think when the dialogue is written it will be explained well enough when the Huntsman begs for forgiveness.

LARRY: Don't you think our chief problem is the right explanation of dialogue?

BILL: Yes.

CHARLIE: S.W. could be humming the song the Prince sang to her the first part of this sequence, couldn't she?

WALT: Yes, that is what we thought.

Just getting a general idea on the opening - S.W. is picking flowers, the menace of the Huntsman already having been planted by the scene of the Huntsman and Queen, she is happy, singing and picking flowers. Then, maybe we can cut to flash of Huntsman just watching Snow White then cut to Snow White where she finds little bird and talks to it, and while that is going on cut back to Huntsman, with S.W.'s offstage voice carrying over, and then the Huntsman draws knife and starts toward S.W.

LARRY: You see the Huntsman closer to S.W. then?

BILL: He should be more or less in shadow.

LARRY: But do you think he should be closer?

WALT: Maybe she could come closer to you at the start, but I don't think the distance matters. You might leave her voice out.

Anyway, he draws his knife and goes toward her, and, I think, you need another shot of her and the bird, and then the menace of the feet and cut to feet and back to her kissing the bird, and as she finishes talking to the bird - then comes the shadow - then her kissing the bird - then bird flies away - then to the shadow of Huntsman when he drops knife and then drops to knees (she is disturbed by the drop of the knife and as the Huntsman drops to knees S.W. arises.) and grabs S.W.'s skirt. She could watch the bird fly away (turn head) as he drops the knife.

I would like to see birch trees where the Huntsmen is standing. He shouldn't be behind a tree just in shadow, very menacing.

Be sure that his pleading is broken up.  
We should get a husky deep voice for the Huntsman.

CHARLIE: The Huntsman could have a black beard on chin.

WALT: I see a voice that is rusty and cracked.

Be sure to have the dialogue very short. NEVER RETURN, IF YOU DO SHE WILL KILL YOU.

BILL: You want it frantic there.

(Ham had an objection where the Huntsman, he thought, made a speech to S.W., but after it being explained that the speech would be broken up into small sentences between S.W. and the Huntsman he withdrew his objection.)

JOE: We just get a flash of the knife as it is being pulled.

WALT: We just flash on the shining article.

Bee Selck

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