

READING GRADE 7

A. Story

A One-Man Show

Charlie watched in horror as Angela, Will, Kyle, and Laura walked away from his movie set, which was not much more than a row of hedges at the edge of the driveway between his and Will's houses. He had dreamed of making a movie like *My Brother Is an Alien!* ever since he got his first video camera, but now everything was falling apart.



The problem was that everyone seemed to think he was too bossy. Charlie didn't see it as being bossy, though; after all, he was the director, writer, and producer of the movie, and therefore, he was entitled to have everything his way—wasn't he?

"I mean, if I don't tell Angela exactly how to say her lines, she's not going to do it right," Charlie grumbled to himself as he picked up equipment. "I know Will said that one shot was impossible to do without a crane, but if that's what I want, he should at least try doing it. Laura says she can't work on the sound if I keep on talking to her, but if I don't keep checking, how do I know she's going to do it correctly? I'm only doing this for everyone's own good so the movie will be perfect, and if they don't want to do it my way, then fine, I'll do it myself."

Charlie spent the rest of the night rewriting the script to fit one actor. He got up early, but it took most of the morning just to get everything into place for the first scene. Every time he thought he was ready, he would realize a prop was missing or something wasn't set right. He was exhausted, but he was determined to shoot at least half the scenes in the script today.

The result, however, was nothing short of disastrous. The lights were too bright and the camera wasn't focused. He had tried to make up for the lack of other actors by ducking out of the camera range and speaking their lines in funny voices, but it looked and sounded ridiculous.

The next morning, Charlie reassembled his cast and crew.

"Okay," he announced, "first of all, I'm extremely grateful that you were willing to give me another chance. Second, from now on, I pledge that I will listen to your suggestions and try to be less bossy. I can't do this without you, so I'll gladly do whatever it takes for all of us to create an artistic masterpiece."

"Well, we'll give it a try," said Will, and the others nodded in agreement.

"Great," said Charlie, "now let's get started."

He returned to his chair and watched excitedly as Will set up the camera, Laura checked the sound levels, and Kyle and Angela took their places. When everything was ready he called, "Action!" and the scene sprang to life.

"George," Angela said, "it's just that you've been acting so peculiar lately that—"

"Cut!" yelled Charlie. "You're supposed to say it like this—"

Then he looked at everyone's faces and swallowed his words.

"Okay," Charlie said, "we'll try it your way first—but then we'll also try my way. We can all watch both versions, and decide together which works best."

The cast and crew looked at each other and nodded.

"All right," Charlie said. "Action!"

Charlie settled back into his chair, and smiled as he watched everyone at work on his movie.