

Nightbirds

by
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NIGHTBIRDS

In Darkness, we hear TINKLING glasses and RUSTLING feathers.

MACK
Could I get a spot here?

A SPOTLIGHT hits MACK THE MOCK, a white-suited mockingbird at a microphone. A glitzy show curtain sparkles behind him.

MACK (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen, gulls and
boychicks, welcome to Birdland!
(WHISTLES, feathery APPLAUSE)
Perched high in the beautiful Treetop
Lounge, we've got a great show for you
tonight. So put your wings together for
Artie Caw and his Crow Bar Band...

Another SPOT hits the "CROW BAR BAND" - THREE CROWS on keyboard, bass and drums, led by another crow, ARTIE CAW.

MACK (CONT'D)
And welcome everybody's favorite songbird
Miss Flo Nightingale...

SPOTLIGHTS converge on FLO -- packed into sequins and spangles, she's the sexiest nightingale you ever saw.

MACK (CONT'D)
I'm your host, Mack the Mock --
(booming MovieFone voice)
"Bird of a thousand voices!"
(Bobby Darin)
"Look out ol' Macky is back, yeah!"
Professor Caw, if you please?

Artie's band strikes up a SONG INTRO ("NIGHTBIRDS") -- a big opening number straight out of a great old RKO movie, except these singers have wings. Call it a Busby Birdly musical. Flo joins Mack at the mic, sings:

FLO
*Most birds work and hunt all day,
Never stop to sing or play...*

MACK
*Come sundown,
They're run-down.*

FLO
*But some birds sleep the day away,
Till twilight falls...*

MACK
Then hey-hey-hey!

MACK & FLO
*We're the fun set, up at sunset,
Flying till dawn --
When other birdies turn in early,
We turn on! We're...*

LIGHTS UP FULL -- the curtain rises to REVEAL a chorus line of glitter-garbed NIGHTINGALES. WHISTLES and CHEERS.

NIGHTINGALES

*Nightbirds!
Hey, put out the light, birds,
It's time for us nightbirds
To rise and shine...*

MACK

The Birdland Beauties, everybody!

NIGHTINGALES

*Nightbirds!
You want pure delight, birds?
You came to the right birds!
Tonight you'll feel fine!*

The Chorusbirds do a tap break. REVEAL they're onstage at...

EXT. BIRDLAND - NIGHT

A lavish nightclub with leafy tables and booths built into the branches of a huge tree. The stage is the ledge of a gothic cathedral, framed by two gargoyles. The decor suggests a Deco '30s speakeasy. Now Mack takes center stage.

MACK

*Sure, I know early birds
Catch all the worms --
But what kinda squirrelly birds
Want breakfast that squirms?
I'd rather dine with the...*

ALL

*Nightbirds!
If daylight's too bright, birds,
And blue skies make ya blue (Boo hoo hoo) --
You just might, birds
Be nightbirds, too!*

APPLAUSE as the Nightingales pose. A scenic curtain falls, featuring a farm with crowing rooster. Mack takes the mic.

MACK

(Elvis)
"Thank you, thank y' very much."
As you know, someone very special is making his debut here tonight.
(imitates OWL)
"Whooo? Whooo?" Oh, the owls are getting impatient, I'll tell you who -- Kid Bantam, that's who!
(imitates HEN)
"Cluck-uck-uck-uck-bakaw!" Listen to those hens, they love him -- staying up late, huh, ladies? Okay, don't get your eggs in a scramble.
(off loony LAUGHS in crowd)
Hoo-boy, the loons are out tonight--"Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoooo!" Now lemme tell you a little about the Kid. You know his real name? First time I met him, I ask "What's your name?" And he says, "dagnabbit, shuddup!" So I say, hey, shuddup yourself, I'm just asking. And he says, get this -- "No, that's my name -- Dagnabbit Shuddup! Anyway, that's what the farmer calls me." Kid you not. True story

From the farmyard scene on the curtain...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARM - NIGHT

A real farmyard scene. The mailbox reads "FARMER FAMILY FARM." All the lights are off in the ramshackle farmhouse, and the henhouse next to it. A COW dozes with a DONKEY, PIGS sleep together, the night is quiet. Then...

Rooster DAG pops into frame, CROWING.

DAG
Brakakakak! Brakakakak! Erkakakak-aroo!

His chest swells -- his throat puffs -- his wattle wobbles as he blasts his brassy jazz riff into the silent night.

DAG (CONT'D)
Er-er-roooo, ba-kak! Er-roooo, ba-kak!
Er-roo bak-kak-kak-kak-kak!

The night starts to respond. As Dag's crow wakes them up, the animals start to complain...

COW/DONKEY/PIGS
Ooooooooooh.... Yawwwwwwww.... Roink!

Somewhere, a dog starts to HOWL. Other DOGS join in.

A light comes on in the henhouse doorway. PENNY emerges -- the cutest little chick you ever saw -- wide awake and eyes sparkling as she listens to Dag crow. Older HENS appear behind her, squinting, groggy and grumpy.

OLD HEN
Get back to bed. Don't encourage him.

Now a CRYING BABY adds his voice to the cacophony -- and LIGHTS start going on in the farmhouse.

DAG
Brakaka-kak, a rooo! Brak...

FARMER (O.S.)
Dagnabbit! Shuddup!

Dag's in musical seventh-heaven, so he doesn't see the BOOK hurled out of the farmhouse window behind him... which CONKS him in the head, silencing him in mid-song. *

DAG
Bak-kak-kak---unk!

Dag sprawls, knocked unconscious. Penny moves to help -- then retreats as...

THE FARMER stomps out of the house in his long-johns with a length of twine in his hands. He kneels by Dag and loops the knotted twin around his beak -- an improvised muzzle.

FARMER
Last chance, Dagnabbit.

He turns back to the house as Dag woozily comes around... to see he's muzzled. Dag FREAKS OUT. He strains against the twine, trying to crow -- but he can only CROAK miserably...

DAG
Melp! Melp...

Penny rushes to help, pecks at the muzzle. Dag pulls away.

PENNY
Don't worry, I'm not gonna kiss you.

But Dag's lovestruck eyes tell us that's the last thing he's worried about. He lets Penny bite his muzzle -- they both twist and pull -- and after an awkwardly intimate moment... Penny pulls the muzzle off! Dag CROWS in delight.

DAG
ERK-ERK-A-ROO!
(catches himself, whispers)
Erk-erk-a-roo.

The noise brings the older hens back to the henhouse door...

HENS
Keep it down! Knock it off! Go to bed,
ya freaks!

OLD HEN
Better yet -- fly the coop! Then we can
all get some sleep.

PENNY
You think we want to be up all night?
it's just how we are.

OLD HEN
(righteous sniff)
No better than nightbirds.

The hens drift back to bed. Penny helps Dag up.

PENNY
Boy, he really threw the book at you.

DAG
Aaah, I'm okay. But how 'bout you?
Still getting henpecked? *

PENNY
You should hear what they say about you.

DAG
Maybe they're right. Maybe we should fly
the coop.

PENNY
Only problem with that? We can't fly.

DAG
We could leave.

PENNY
You mean... cross the road?

DAG
Yeah.

PENNY
But... why?

DAG
Why not? See what's on the other side?

PENNY
That's it? That's your plan? "We'll see when we get there?"
("men")
Roosters. No idea where they're going, and won't even ask how to get there. Well, til you get a little more specific about your intentions, you can just cross that road by yourself, mister.

DAG
Come on, Penny, don't be so human.

PENNY
I'm not human! It's just -- when I cross the road with a guy, I wanna know what's on the other side. You get back to me when you figure out where you're going.

DAG
Where we're going.

She smiles, softening. They nestle a little closer. Dag
CROWS a soft arpeggio, sings: ("If I Could Fly")

DAG (CONT'D)
*Talk about boring, everyone's snoring,
It's not even half-past eight...*

PENNY
*And here we are, staying up late
Again...*

DAG
Everyone's always peckin' and pickin' --

PENNY
"Well, she's an odd duck..."

DAG
"Man, he's one funky chicken."

DAG & PENNY
*I wish we could up and take flight
To wherever birds stay up all night!*

DAG		PENNY
<i>If I could fly,</i>	(spoken)	
<i>I'd say goodbye...</i>	Why?!	

DAG		PENNY
<i>To everyone but you.</i>	Whew.	

DAG		PENNY
<i>If I could fly,</i>	Hey!	
<i>I'd fly away --</i>		

DAG

To find us a home somewhere new.

PENNY

Ooh...

DAG

A home somewhere far,
Where we'll be who we are...

PENNY

Where we'll rest in our nest all day...

DAG

Where we'll stay up and play
Til the night fades away...

DAG & PENNY

And who gives a hoot
What the other birds say!

If we could fly,
We'd fly together,
Birds of a feather
Across the sky,
To someplace free...
If only we
Could fly.

Penny's eyes sparkle. Dag draws close. MUSIC continues under. They're just about to kiss when... CONK! A package drops on Dash's head. He spins and stumbles to the ground. MUSIC stops. Penny rushes to help Dag up.

DAG

Ow! Man, I am having a bad head day.

ON THE PACKAGE - which has ripped open when it hit the ground. Dag reaches down to pull out...

A SOUVENIR SNOWGLOBE with a city skyline. Dag shakes it.

REVERSE SHOT - Dag and Penny's eyes are huge in the rounded glass, as they watch glitter swirl around the tiny city.

DAG (CONT'D)

Hey, it's snowing! I mean out here!

DAG'S POV - The snowglobe lowers to reveal a real sky full of FLUTTERING WHITE FLAKES. No, not flakes -- pieces of mail, drifting to earth. Dag and Penny stare in wonder.

*
*

ON THE POSTCARDS as they land -- Fairy-tale views of a Manhattan-style city. Dag reads the printed messages...

DAG (CONT'D)

"Live the night life..." "Join us after dark..." "The city that never sleeps!"

Dag looks to Penny, amazed -- here's their answer! Penny's eyes sparkle. They're just about to kiss again when... THWUMP! MUSIC stops abruptly as Dag and Penny are startled apart by the crash-landing of a PIGEON right in front of them. The pigeon (HOMER) wears a messenger vest, a mailbag slung over one wing, a thermos on the other.

HOMER
 Whoa! Hey lovebirds, sorry to interrupt,
 it's just my bag spilled and...
 (spots the snowglobe)
 Whoa, lucky that didn't break.

DAG
 (points to his head)
 No, but this did.

HOMER
 Sorry dude, nothing serious, right?
 (holds up his wings)
 How many wings?

DAG
 Duh -- two?

HOMER
 Excellent, no concussion, hey, accidents
 happen, you got insurance, right?

As he talks a mile a minute, he unslings a thermos from his
 shoulder and pours a cup of coffee. Like many delivery
 workers, Homer is hypercaffeinated.

HOMER (CONT'D)
 Tell ya what, let's be cool and not even
 involve the vultures, dig? And you can
 keep the doohickey.

Dag rubs his head angrily... Penny eyes the snowglobe
 longingly... Dag eyes Penny longingly...

HOMER (CONT'D)
 So... we cool?
 (off Dag's shrug)
 Excellent. I'm Homer.

DAG
 (as they shake wings)
 Dagnabbit Shuddup.

HOMER
 Whoa ace, say what now?

PENNY
 That's his name, call him Dag, I'm Penny.

HOMER
 Thanks, Pen, you are one knockout chick,
 and one righteous rooster. What are you
 two doing up this time of night besides,
 you know, chicken-necking? You two got
 some nightbird in ya?

DAG
 So they say.

HOMER
 It's not a bad thing.

He picks up scattered postcards. Dag and Penny help.

DAG
Homer, where did these come from?

HOMER
The City. You never been to the City?

DAG
Is it really a "city that never sleeps?"

HOMER
Brother and how. You gotta go, it'll
blow your birdy brains. The Central Park
Poopery... The Statue of Lavatory... The
International Airport-a-potty!
(off their looks)
Hey, I'm a pigeon, the world is my
toilet. And best of all...
(finds a postcard)
Birdland!

ON POSTCARD - a view of the lavish treetop nightclub.

HOMER (CONT'D)
"Home of the famous Treetop Lounge where
the nightbirds sing til dawn and closing
time's not til tomorrow." Get off your
tailfeathers, check it out! It's not
even that far, you can see it from here!

He flutters to the roof of the farmhouse porch. Penny and
Dag look helplessly at each other. Then...

Dag flaps onto the roof of the henhouse... then onto a tall
stack of crates. Penny follows tentatively. Dag leaps to
the trellis by the porch, grabs the slats with his claws. He
reaches his wings out for Penny -- and catches her as she
jumps. Together they climb up the trellis to join Homer...

ON THE PORCH ROOF - Homer points to the distant lights of a
glittering skyline. Dag and Penny squint to make it out.

DAG
Wow! You think we could make it there?

HOMER
Well if you can make it there, you'll
make it anywhere.
(sees Penny's reluctance)
You know, you could go first -- get a
job, find a place -- and come back for
Penny once you're all set up. I'll help,
just call when ya get there. I'm at the
Hotel Broadway. Catch you on the
flipside, fowls!

With a salute he takes off. Dag and Penny wave goodbye --
then look at the city. MUSIC UNDER ("If I Could Fly").

PENNY
It's so big... and so distant...

DAG
*But it's not non-existent!
Now our destination's in sight...*

DAG & PENNY
*Just a couple of loonies,
 Out here in the boonies...
 Still we feel that it's real
 And it's right!*

*So you and I
 Will keep our eyes on
 That far horizon
 Across the sky,
 Where we'd be free...
 If only we
 Could fly.*

They nestle closer, silhouetted against the moonlit sky. The night itself starts to fly via TIME-LAPSE FAST-MOTION:

The moon arcs downward -- they draw closer -- Dag puts a wing around Penny -- she draws away -- they look at the sky -- awkwardly inch together again -- Penny lays her head on Dag's shoulder -- and he puts his wing around her.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

As sunlight seeps into the sky and paints it in pastels, Dag and Penny nestle together, dozing.

PENNY
 Dag? Isn't it time for you to...

DAG
 Mmm? Oh yeah, okay...

He tries to straighten up and crow... then realizes -- he's on the edge of the roof! Groggy, he instantly falls off.

Penny SQUAWKS -- then takes a brave, running leap to the crates... down to the henhouse... to the ground.

The Farmer emerges from the house, passes unconscious Dag...

FARMER
 Pathetic.

He moves to open the gate for a TURNIP TRUCK as it turns in. As Penny runs to Dag's side, the other Hens emerge from the henhouse, blinking and stretching in the dawn light. They stare at Penny as if she were a fallen chicken.

OLD HEN
 Pathetic.

As the Farmer helps the TRUCK DRIVER load baskets of turnips onto his truck, he sees...

A LONG BLACK CAR approaching. It noses through the gate and SQUEALS to a stop by the Farmer. Tinted glass rolls down, replacing the Farmer's reflection with the crabbed face of...

CAP'N PLUCKETT - a withered despot in a white linen suit. A beady-eyed PARROT (PAULIE CRACKERS) rides on his shoulder; a big RHODE ISLAND RED rooster (RED) dozes at his side; a glowering HOUND DOG (GENERAL LEE) sits at his feet.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
Anything to sell me today, Farmer Farmer?

The farmer's shadow closes in on sleeping Dag... who awakens rudely as the Farmer hoists him into the air.

FARMER
How 'bout this worthless rooster? Up all night, sleeps all day. Heck, forget selling, I'll give him to you.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
I do have a certain interest in birds of a nocturnal nature...

He pats his own sleeping rooster. The Farmer holds Dag up to the window... where he attracts the attention of General Lee. The Dog GROWLS. Dag squirms.

CAP'N PLUCKETT (CONT'D)
But that's not what I want to purchase.

FARMER
I keep telling you, this land's not for sale. We ain't dead yet.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
Sure you are, you just ain't got the good sense to lie down.

As the sun rises, a LARGE SHADOW FALLS over both men. REVEAL the pastoral farm is bordered by a TOWERING BRICK WALL.

A billboard at the top reads "CAP'N PLUCKETT'S POULTRY" -- and features a likeness of the old Cap'n himself, lifting a drumstick to his mouth with a motorized hand. Up and down it goes, as the Cap'n takes the same bite forever.

BACK TO SCENE: The Cap'n hands the Farmer an official-looking envelope -- NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE AND EVICTION.

CAP'N PLUCKETT (CONT'D)
Sorry about this, Farmer Farmer. Just doin' my duty is all.

PAULIE CRACKERS
Doin' my duty, rawk! Doin' my duty.

Now General Lee BARKS at Dag -- who kicks out and lands a swipe across the dog's nose. Furious General Lee lunges through the window. The Farmer pulls back and drops Dag... who runs for his life, with General Lee in hot pursuit.

EXT. FARMYARD - DAWN

Dag races beneath HOES and RAKES leaning against the wall... knocking them over as he passes. Hot on Dag's tail, the General stumbles and rolls over the clattering tools. He finally rights himself -- and steps right on the blade of a hoe which obeys the laws of slapstick and swings upright, CONKING the dog in the noggin.

With a flutter of wings, Dag leaps lightly over a haystack. Behind him, General Lee plows straight through -- and tumbles out the other side, spitting hay and pawing it from his eyes.

Dag heads straight for the sleeping MULE... and runs under him, tickling the Mule's belly as he goes. The Mule giggles in his sleep... then wakes abruptly, annoyed. Who woke him up? He looks behind him to see... General Lee approaching. The Dog sees the angry mule ahead, ready to kick. He tries to brake, but too late...

Dag looks back as the mule BRAYS and the Dog YELPS. His eyes follow General Lee's brief flight and hard landing. THUD. As the Cow and Pig wake, complaining loudly, Dag races to...

THE HENHOUSE - He dives through the small door with General Lee inches behind. WHAM! The dog's nose wedges tightly in the henhouse door.

INT. HENHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Shaking from the impact. Feathers flying. Hens SQUAWKING in alarm. Dag hurries to Penny...

DAG
Pen, remember we talked about me leaving?

Penny nods. Dag points at the dog's snout behind him, snarling and slavering as it tries to free itself.

DAG (CONT'D)
Seems like a good time.

Dag takes a peck at the snout. General Lee YOWLS and strains to pull free of the door. Dag pecks as he talks...

DAG (CONT'D)
It'll be okay, I'll find a job, and I'll find a place for us to live....

PENNY
Together?

DAG
(takes her hint)
And I'll find an all-night wedding chapel!

PENNY
Dag, are you...?

DAG
Sure, will you...?

Before Penny can answer... CRRRRRAAAACK! Wood splits as the dog pulls free, with the doorframe still jammed on his snout.

DAG (CONT'D)
Gotta go.

As he leaps out the wide-open door...

PENNY
Yes! The answer is yes!

EXT. HENHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

General Lee's at the base of the henhouse ramp, trying to pull the door-frame off his snout...

...as Dag leaps out and lands hard on the top of the ramp. The whole thing see-saws -- Dag's end drops to the ground -- the other end lands an uppercut to General Lee's jaw.

The dog YOWLS. Dag skeddadles. He takes a running, flapping leap... and barely makes it to the top of the fence. Whew.

Angry hens watch Dag's escape from their shattered doorway.

OLD HEN
Good riddance.

EXT. FARMYARD - CONTINUOUS

Dag races along the rail with General Lee running below, snarling jaws open to reveal a mouth full of teeth and drool. The Turnip Truck is pulling out of the gate as Dag runs down the fence... and leaps off!

He lands on turnips, which roll out from under him. Dag slips -- slides -- almost tumbles off. But he curls his claws around a truckbed rail and hangs on for dear life as General Lee gallops through the gate, keeping pace. The dog launches himself into the air, lunging at the tailgate...

Dag cringes as the dog torpedoes at him... then drops. DUST billows as Lee hits the ground. Missed it by that much.

Dag settles his tailfeathers into the truckload of turnips, watching the farm and furious General Lee shrink away.

MACK (V.O.)
And so our hero made the epic journey
from rural heartland to sin-soaked city.

A jazzy version of "(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66" plays as we

DISSOLVE TO:

DAG'S ROAD-TRIP MONTAGE - Bucolic heartland pastures pass by as a SUPERIMPOSED ROAD MAP charts the truck's progress with a dotted line... Rural road signs become highway markers: Route 66, US 10... Forests and lakefronts give way to suburban sprawl as... that DOTTED LINE nears a BIG CITY on the map.

MACK (CONT'D)
He's a little fuzzy on the details, since
he was traveling by day...

ON THE TRUCK BED -- where Dag dozes on turnips, SNORING.

MACK (CONT'D)
...so he pretty much slept through the
whole trip.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL the truck is now crawling in four lanes of heavy traffic on...

EXT. BROOKLYNESQUE BRIDGE - AFTERNOON

Until the truck is just one of a thousand colorful specks crossing the water into the BIG CITY SKYLINE.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - AFTERNOON

ON DAG - jolted awake as the truck stops. His eyes open...

DAG'S POV - CITY SKYSCRAPERS soar into the sky.

Dag blinks, looks again. The SKYSCRAPERS grow even taller.

Suddenly the truck RATTLES as the driver opens the tailgate to unload. Dag SQUAWKS and leaps onto the street...

Where he's nearly CREAMED by CAR TIRES speeding past. He retreats under the truck...

And emerges on the other side. Sighs with relief -- then SQUAWKS as he's nearly trampled by sidewalk PEDESTRIANS. He scurries one way to avoid RUSHING FEET -- then jumps the other way as a BICYCLE whizzes by. He dives for safety...

EXT. AN ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Dag crouches by a TRASHCAN, breathing hard as he gazes at all the people and traffic barrelling past. He doesn't see the HEAD rising out of the trash above him -- black mask around beady eyes -- meet COONEY the raccoon.

COONEY
Well well well, what we have we here,
Poss? ...Poss?

Next to him in the trashcan dozes a POSSUM -- his partner in crime POSS, the smaller and, at this hour, sleepier of the pair. (Their partnership is a Penn-and-Teller affair, with Cooney doing all the talking.) Cooney nudges Poss awake.

COONEY (CONT'D)
Think this boy's new in town?
(calls down to Dag)
Need some help, son?

Dag looks around --where's that voice coming from? He's startled as Cooney leaps from the can and lands beside him.

COONEY (CONT'D)
I bet your mama told you not to talk to
strangers, so let's be strangers no more.
I'm Cooney, and this is my partner, Poss.

Poss lands on the other side, again catching Dag off-guard.

DAG
Hey! Hi... I'm Dag.
(off Poss's mute reaction)
Doesn't talk much, does he?

COONEY
Silent partner.

DAG
Could you tell me how to get to Birdland?

Cooney and Poss trade a look -- can't resist the set-up.

COONEY
Practice! Practice!
(laughs, then)
I could tell you were a musician.

DAG
You could? I am? See, it's my first
time in the city...

COONEY
No kiddin'. Fresh off the farm, no
experience, you'll get yourself in big
trouble without expert professionals to
steer your career. Lucky you found us.

He nudges Poss, who hands Dag a business card. Dag reads:

DAG
"Cooney & Poss, Scavenging and Hauling?"

Cooney snatches the card away, as Poss hands Dag another.

DAG (CONT'D)
"Cooney & Poss, Pest Control!"

Cooney grabs Poss's handful of business cards, fans through
them til he finds the one he wants. Hands it to Dag...

DAG (CONT'D)
"Cooney & Poss, Artists Management."
Shoot, I'm no artist.

COONEY
We'll be the judge of that. Show us what
you got -- sing, dance, whatever you do.

DAG
Oh, I just crow a little...

Cooney and Poss feign eagerness. Bashful, Dag clears his
throat... SQUEAKS... settles... and starts to CROW.

DAG (CONT'D)
Brakakaw, brakakaw, brakakeeeee... baby!
Brakakaw brakakaw...

ON A WINDOW LEDGE high above, Mack the mockingbird is
adjusting his tie in the window's reflection, singing:

MACK
Listen to the mockingbird, oh that crazy
mockingbird...

He stops as he hears Dag crowing below. Bops to the beat --
hey, not bad. He looks for the source of the sound...

BACK TO SCENE -- as Dag finishes big.

DAG
Brakak, brakeek, babop-dop-deep dra-kow!

COONEY
Whoa, dig that crazy sound. You got a
lotta talent. But not a lotta know-how,
no-how. You need a good manager

Cooney starts to rub Dag's shoulders with his paws...

As he talks, Cooney slyly lifts a corner of Dag's left wing. Poss reaches underneath, poking around for a pocket to pick.

COONEY (CONT'D)
We'll make sure ya meet the right birds.
Get the best gigs...

Poss shakes his head, nothing. So Cooney lifts the right wing while Poss pokes...

COONEY (CONT'D)
And above all, make sure nobody exploits you. Really, thirty percent's a small price to pay.

DAG
Thirty percent of what?... Hey!

Dag's caught Poss in the act. Cooney scrambles to cover...

COONEY
He's just checking your measurements, you'll need some new outfits. First we get you a stylist, some good pictures, I know some guys, I'll get you a deal. Then we'll get you a personal trainer...
(off Dag's reaction)
You're no spring chicken, bubbe, those drumsticks need definition. All at minimal cost, a small investment in your future, how much money do you have, anyway, and where do you keep it?

DAG
Actually, I kinda left home in a hurry today. I didn't bring any cash.

Cooney and Poss trade looks -- and change moods. Cooney flexes his claws, grabs Dag by the shoulders.

COONEY
Listen, you rube, this is the City, you wanna make it here, it costs money. Now are you gonna help us help you? Or do we have to shake it outta you?

Cooney shoves frightened Dag against a wall. Then... the raccoon's expression changes from menace to pain.

COONEY (CONT'D)
Yow!

REVEAL mockingbird Mack has landed squarely on Cooney's head, grabbing a furry ear in each claw.

MACK
(Cagney)
You dirty overgrown furry rat -- let him go, or the ears come off.
(digs in; Pacino/Scarface)
I'll rip em off and shove em up your nose, say goo'bye to your leettle friends!

COONEY
Yaaaaaaa, get off me!

He releases Dag. Scared Poss flips onto his back, playing possum. As Cooney escapes, he grabs Poss's tail and drags him along, racing out of the alley. Mack looks Dag over... *

MACK
New in town, kid?

DAG
How'dja know?

MACK
Lucky guess. Just fell off the turnip truck, huh?

DAG
No! ...I jumped off.

MACK
Yeah? What's your name, kid?

DAG
Dagnabbit Shuddup.

MACK
Hey, shuddup yourself, I was just asking!

DAG
That's my name, Dagnabbit Shuddup.
That's what the farmer calls me, anyway.

MACK
Hunh. How's about I call you Dag?
(extends a wing)
Mack the Mock, stand-up comic and stand-up bird, at your service.

DAG
Wow. You're in show biz?

MACK
Don't tell me -- just where you wanna be.

DAG
I never really thought about it til Mr. Cooney said...

MACK
Yeah well, forget anything that con-artist tells ya.

DAG
I suspected he wasn't quite on the level.

MACK
What tipped you off? The burglar's mask? The prison-stripes? Or when he tried to mug ya? Listen, kid, this town's full of guys like Cooney, happy to take all the dough while you do all the work. You got a sweet sound, kid, but you need some street-smarts, stat. You got a job yet? Maybe I can help. Follow me!

He spreads his wings and takes off. Dag watches him go. After a beat... Mack returns.

MACK (CONT'D)
What'samatter?

DAG
Can't fly.

MACK
Oh yeah, roosters, right, I knew that. Okay, I'll go slow so you can keep up. Hey, you know how to get to Birdland?

DAG
...Practice?

MACK
Heard that one, hunh? Come on...

As Mack takes off, Dag double-takes...

DAG
Birdland? We're going to Birdland?

And he races out of the alley...

EXT. CITY STREETS - MONTAGE - TWILIGHT

DAG'S POV - A HUNDRED PAIRS OF LEGS, towering above and clomping past him as he navigates the city sidewalk. Dag escapes the crunch to hug a wall -- scans the sky...

Perched on a streetlight, Mack waves at Dag, flies on.

DAG dodges an oncoming CYCLIST -- lands in the path of a SKATEBOARDER, who swerves in the nick of time. DAG spins as the skateboard whizzes by... to find himself face-to-face with... a PACK OF SLOBBERING, GROWLING DOGS.

DAG
Brakkkk!

He turns and runs. The Dogs YAP and charge after him. Luckily they're on all leashes held by a hapless DOGWALKER...

DOGWALKER
Heel! Heel! HEEL!

From a telephone wire, Mack sees the Dogwalker dragged by his dogs as Dag makes his escape.

MACK
Hey Dag! Grab a cab!

Dag spreads his wings and takes a flying leap onto the a parked car -- and from there a passing YELLOW CAB.

SPLAT! From the CABBIE'S POV -- as Dag lands and immediately gets flattened across the windshield, wings oustretched.

CABBIE
Hey! Move ya stupid bird...

Dag tries to smile at the Cabbie -- until the WINDSHIELD WIPERS start up, whipping him back and forth across the windshield. He scrambles to climb up to...

THE ROOF OF THE CAB -- where he almost tumbles off -- but curls his claws around the "TAXI" signs and hangs on.

MACK'S POV - Dag perches atop the cab, riding through heavy traffic up a street that looks a lot like Broadway. As the cab stops at a light, we swoop down, circling above Dag...

MACK
Take a right!

Dag eyes the crossing traffic, takes a running leap into a TRUCK. Going in the wrong direction.

MACK (CONT'D)
Your other right! This way!

Dog reconnoiters, jumps onto a car headed the other way, digs his claws into the canvas top. He searches the sky for Mack.

MACK (CONT'D)
Right behind ya.

Dag yelps, surprised. Mack has landed on the car top.

MACK (CONT'D)
We get off at this next...

The car hits an intersection and SQUEALS to a stop -- sending our heroes tumbling off.

EXT. STREET - TWILIGHT

Dag and Mack land hard, rolling on the pavement. Luckily they're stopped... WHAM! WHAM! By the trunk of an enormous tree. As they struggle to their feet, Dag looks up to see...

GOTHIC CATHEDRAL TOWERS (think St. Patrick's) soaring above.

DAG
We're going to church?

MACK
Quite the contrary.

He taps on the massive tree-trunk with his beak. A speakeasy-style PEEPHOLE OPENS. Glinting eyes and a GRUFF VOICE:

VOICE (O.S.)
Yeah? Oh, hiya Mack.

A DOOR opens in the trunk, revealing the Club Bouncer inside-- COCKY CACCIATORE, a burly, greying rooster.

MACK
Dag, meet Cocky Cacciatore. The Cocky Cacciatore.

DAG
Yeah? Wow.

COCKY
He never heard of me.

DAG
Sure I have.
(off Cocky's stare)
No I haven't.

MACK
He was World Cockfighting Champ five
years running is all.

COCKY
"Was" being the key word. Can't expect
kids to know ancient history. Hiya, Dag.

They shake wings. Mack and Dag step inside. Cocky sticks
his head out, yells upward...

COCKY (CONT'D)
Okay, fellas.

PAN UP TO REVEAL four big, burly NIGHTHAWKS perched on
branches above -- each harnessed to a rope that passes into
the tree and down to the elevator. The Hawks flap and take
off in four directions... pulling the elevator up.

INT. ELEVATOR

As it rises, Cocky studies Dag.

COCKY
Kinda past your bedtime, ain't it?

MACK
Think we got a nightbird here, like you.

COCKY
Yeah? Happy to welcome another freak of
nature. You come to the right place kid.

MUSIC begins as the elevator stops. Doors open to reveal...

INT. TREETOP LOUNGE - TWILIGHT

Dag gapes like Dorothy in Oz as he enters Birdland, even more
spectacular than its postcard. On the gargoyle-framed stage,
a chorus line of NIGHTINGALES rehearse as the Crow Bar band
plays and a fey jaybird (BUSBY BIRDLY) directs.

NIGHTINGALES
*Nightbirds!
You came to the right birds,
This place will ignite, birds,
When we get hot!
And we get hot a lot...*

ARTIE CAW
*Callin' all nightbirds,
All you blackbirds and white birds--
Wanna hit a new height, birds?
This is the spot!*

Eying Dag, Busby sings along with the chorus...

BUSBY & NIGHTINGALES
*You feeling blue, bird?
 Lost all your spark?
 Cheer up, boy, and come enjoy
 Some laughter after dark!*

Mack smiles fondly as he mutters to Dag:

MACK
 He's a screaming jaybird, but he puts on
 a helluva show.

Dag is in jazz heaven, chicken-dancing along to the band...

DAG
 Man, they're great! I can't wait to play
 with them.

MACK
 Hunh? Aw, no, kid, you're not working
 with the band, you're gonna be a busbird.

DAG
 (trying to hide disappointment)
 Oh! Well that's good too. I mean, I'll
 still be kinda showbiz... adjacent.

DISSOLVE TO:

DAG - now wearing a red busbird's jacket, as Mack finishes
 tying Dag's bowtie. REVEAL we're in...

INT. BIRDLAND KITCHEN

Dag stands at the end of a line of Waiters and Busbirds as
 the NIGHTHAWK MAITRE D' inspects his staff, singing:

MAITRE D'
*Another busy night, birds!
 So don't get uptight, birds --
 No fights and no flight, birds --
 Stay on your toes!*

The Waiters do a quick tap-break, twirling their trays. Dag
 joins in clumsily, following their lead.

MAITRE D' (CONT'D)
*The customer's always right, birds!
 So keep it polite, birds,
 And see that tonight, birds,
 Everything flows!*

The Waiters perform a balletic routine, passing their trays
 down the line... to Dag, who ends up holding the whole stack.

DISSOLVE TO:

DAG - LATER - navigating with his tray through a PACKED HOUSE
 -- drunken LOONS, cuddling LOVEBIRDS, GULLS in sailor hats
 and macho NIGHTHAWKS chirping up NIGHTINGALES and DOVES. The
 Club's open, and it's hopping. As Dag clears plates...

DAG
*Who knew there were so many...
 Nightbirds?*

DAG (CONT'D)
There's just-a-light-bite birds...
 (picks up big bowls)
And big appetite birds!

He checks out the ENORMOUS PIGEON who polished off the bowls.

DAG (CONT'D)
 He gives new meaning to eat-like-a-bird.

He moves to another table, where dandified, drunken LOONS laugh as they drop empties on his tray.

DAG (CONT'D)
I see high-as-a-kite birds...

Moving to another table, where a party of HUMMINGBIRDS lie across the tabletop, claws up, deeply asleep.

DAG (CONT'D)
And out-like-a-light birds...
 (spoken)
 Can't hold their nectar.
 (grins, sings)
*And all of 'em nightbirds,
 Just like me!*

ON THE STAGE - as the Chorusbirds sing:

NIGHTINGALES
*It's time to stay up late, birds --
 So bring a hot date, birds,
 Or hunt for a mate, birds,
 Right here and now!*

ON MACK - now cuddling up to a matronly OWL in the front row.

MACK
 Hey, I found her! Wow!

NIGHTINGALES
*No reason to wait, birds,
 So don't hesitate, birds --
 There's gaggles of great birds
 Right here, and how!*

Mack joins Artie and the band for a splashy finale, as the chorusbirds do a G-rated "fan dance" with peacock feathers.

MACK
*Yeah, only the preferred land
 Here -- in -- Birdland!*

They bring their fans together... then cascade them apart to reveal a REAL PEACOCK, taller than anyone else on stage. He spreads his regal tail as a dazzling backdrop for the finish.

EVERYBODY
*Come fly with the --
 Nightbirds!
 Here we're allowed to be nightbirds!*

ON DAG, in back, wowed by the show and singing softly along.

DAG
And we're proud to be nightbirds!

MACK
What a crowd! Yeah --

EVERYBODY
Nightbirds are the right birds to be!

The crowd WHISTLES, CROWS and CLAPS THEIR WINGS as the curtain falls as Mack takes the mic:

MACK
 Thanks everybody, we're gonna take a little break, but stick to your perches, we got two more shows!

DISSOLVE TO:

DAG - still dreamy-eyed as Mack approaches...

MACK (CONT'D)
 So ya like the show, kid? Stupid peacock keeps missing his cue, there's a guy got hired for his looks.

Suddenly Mack stiffens at the sight of Paulie Crackers and Red -- the parrot and rooster we saw with Cap'n Pluckett. Mack and Paulie glare, feathers ruffling. They know each other. And don't like what they know.

MACK (CONT'D)
 Well, look what the cat dragged in.

PAULIE
 ("hello Jerry")
 Hello... Mack.

MACK
 ("hello Newman")
 Hello... Paulie. Dag, Paulie Crackers. He used to be in showbiz, but he couldn't make it. There's just one Bird of a Thousand Voices. He's only got twelve.

PAULIE
 (Joe Pesci)
 I didn't like showbiz. Because I am not a clown. Do I look like a clown to you?

MACK
 Honest answer?

PAULIE
 Showbiz is for clowns. I'm managing fighters now. Like the champ here.

MACK
 Good for you. Come on, Dag, time to meet the boss.

As he pulls Dag away, Mack points upwards -- through the leafy canopy -- to the church tower soaring into the night.

CUT TO:

AN UPSIDE-DOWN POV OF MACK

MACK
 Dag, this is Mister "Bats" Amore.

DAG
 (gasping for breath)
 It's... a... pleasure...

INT. BELFRY TOWER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

"BATS" AMORE -- yes, he's a bat, in formalwear -- drops from the rafter he's hanging from, flips upright to look Dag over.

MACK
 He had to take the stairs. Roosters, they can't fly, you know.

BATS AMORE
 Yeah, I know. And another thing they can't do? They can't stay awake! The last one slept all night.

MACK
 This kid's a nightbird like Cocky. He's a real dynamo... normally.

DAG
 (still panting)
 You gotta... lotta... stairs.

BATS AMORE
 Johnny! Get him some water.

JOHNNY GUANO, a brawny, brainless bat, fills a glass from a rainspout -- and SPLASHES it in Dag's face.

BATS AMORE (CONT'D)
 To drink, you idiot.

DAG
 That's okay... felt good.

BATS AMORE
 My associate, Johnny Guano. And you are?

DAG
 Dagnabbit Shuddup.

BATS
 ...Dagnabbit, what did you say to me?

MACK
 (hastens to intervene)
 His name is Shuddup, long story, Mr. A, with which we will not bore you, call him Dag. Give him a try-out, hunh?

BATS
 Show me what you got tonight. Then we'll talk turkey.

JOHNNY
 Hey, that's good boss. Talkin' turkey to a chicken.

BATS
 You know about "three strikes you're out?" Here you only get one. Johnny -- give the kid a ride down.

INT. BELFRY TOWER

Johnny glides down on outstretched wings past winding stairs, holding nervous Dag in his claws. As they hit bottom...

JOHNNY
Watch your step, Rooster.
(then, guffaws)
Get it? Your "step," 'cuz you can't...

DAG
'Cuz I can't fly, yessir, funny.

With a WHOOSH of wings, Johnny circles back up to the shadows as Mack flies down, lands by Dag.

MACK
Hey, be careful with these guys. You know why they call Mr. Amore, "Bats?"

DAG
...'cuz he's a bat?

MACK
Because he's bat-poop insane. So from now on? Let me do the talking. You just keep your eyes open and your beak shut.

Dag nods eagerly -- eyes wide open, beak tightly shut.

INT. TREETOP LOUNGE - NIGHT - LATER

A SNACK BIRD passes with a trayful of STIFFENED WORMS, hawking her wares like a cigarette girl in a human club.

SNACK BIRD
Centipedes... millipedes... worms...
centipedes... millipedes... worms...

BATS
Over here, sweetheart.

Bats and Johnny now occupy a leafy booth overlooking the club. Bats plucks a big millipede from the Snack Bird's tray -- bites off the head and spits it out like a cigar tip -- and starts nibbling. He flips a coin onto the tray.

ANOTHER PART OF THE CLUB - Dag maneuvers through the crowd with a full tray. He hears a FANFARE, looks to the stage...

MACK
My friends, get ready for a trip to the moon on the gossamer wings and the silken voice of Miss -- Flo -- Nightingale!

The curtain parts to reveal FLO NIGHTINGALE in all her glittery glory. Packed into sequins, she's one hot chick. The band plays an INTRO, she opens her beak to sing, and...

CRASH! The band stops. Flora stops. ALL EYES turn to...

Dumbfounded Dag, who has dropped his tray.

Everyone reacts -- CUSTOMERS laugh and hoot... Bats and Johnny narrow their beady eyes... Flo stares... then smiles.

FLO
 Now that's what I call a reaction.
 (crowd laughter)
 One more time, boys.
 (to Dag)
 And honey? Easy on the percussion.

Dag stares at the stage, goofy-beaked and dreamy-eyed.

The Band strikes up the fanfare again. Flo sings: "NEVER TRY TO CLIP MY WINGS"

FLO (CONT'D)
Shy? Me?
 (sultry laugh)
Try me.
But once we're done, let's turn the page--
When our time's flown by,
Then I gotta fly...
'Cause this bird don't sing in a cage!

You can date me,
You can hate me,
Just don't incarcerate me.
Keep adorin' me
Till you're borin' me,
Just never lock the door on me.
You can woo me,
Pursue me,
Do ooh, so many things,
But never try to clip my wings.

Flo slithers offstage into the front row, where she sings to admiring nightbirds -- a tipsy Loon, a tough-guy Nighthawk.

FLO (CONT'D)
I'm a lover, not a fighter,
I'm a kisser, not a biter,
I'm a lovebird just as long I'm free!
Hold me lightly, not too tightly --
Maybe every other nightly?
And show me how ya love to fight for me!
 (spoken)
 Take it, Artie...

THE BAND swings into its musical break. As Artie starts wailing his clarinet solo...

DAG starts to bop with the music. With the full tray held in his wings, he shuts his eyes, sways, steps, spins... and bumps blindly into the SNACK CHICK, who tumbles into a table of drunken LOONS -- who laugh as worms fly everywhere.

Mack rolls his eyes, hurries to control Dag...

Too late. As the music soars, Dag's throat puffs... his wattle wobbles... and he lets loose his own jazzy CROW.

DAG
 Ek-ek-ek-ek-ek-arooooo!

Possessed by the music, he hurls his tray into the air...

Mack races to catch the tray -- then uses it to catch the glasses tumbling through the air.

Artie BLASTS his clarinet to drown Dag out... but Dag just blasts right back:

DAG (CONT'D)
Erkaroo-erkaroo-erkarooo-ak!

Mack catches a bowl on his head -- and misses the last glass, which CRASHES to the floor.

The MUSIC STOPS. Artie has stopped playing to stare at Dag.

Bats and Johnny are staring, too. So are all the customers.

Dag's oblivious as he blissfully CROWS. Eyes closed, he doesn't notice Mack tugging his wing. So Mack sticks his beak straight into Dag's ear...

MACK
Dagnabbit Shuddup!

Dag's eyes open. His beak closes. Sees everyone staring...

ARTIE CAW
May we continue? A-one-two-three and...

The MUSIC cranks up as Johnny approaches angrily.

MACK
What can I say, the kid likes music.

JOHNNY GUANO
Yeah? He screws up again, you're both gonna be hearing angel music.

Mack looks to see if Dag gets the message... but the rooster's staring dreamily at the stage as...

Flo returns to the mic. She winks at Dag as she sings:

FLO
*You can kiss me,
Or diss me,
Or buy me diamond rings,
But never try to clip my wings!*
(big finish)
*You can grip me,
Unzip me,
And don't be reluctant to tip me!
But never -- ever -- clip
My wings.*

The crowd goes wild. Flo takes her bows...

Mack corners Dag, beak-to-beak.

MACK
What'd I tell ya? Eyes open, beak shut.
And what do you do? Shut your eyes and
open your stupid beak! I oughta...

RED (O.S.)
Hey baby, I'll unzip ya!

Mack and Dag look to see...

Red, the hulking rooster who came in with Paulie, now lurches drunkenly from his ringside seat to the stage...

RED (CONT'D)
I'll unzip ya and tip ya, how about that?

FLO
Okay, hon, I wasn't singing just to you.

Flo tries to exit gracefully, but the Rooster grabs her.

ON MACK - seething.

MACK
I'll handle this, Dag. Dag?

Dag's already gone. Mack reacts to SQUEALS and CRASHES...

...as Dag leaps from one table to another, charging straight for the STAGE. Red barely has time to react...

ROOSTER
What the...?

...before Dag barrels into him. Feathers fly and the roosters roll straight into the bandstand. Artie and the crows SQUAWK and take flight as Dag and Red smash into the drum set. Dag's head plunges through the bass drum. Red sits up fast-- and CLANGS his head against the cymbals. POP! Dag pulls his head out of the drum.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
Hey! You know who I am?

DAG
Yeah you're the guy who was just leaving.

Dag grabs Red by his wings -- hoists him to his feet-- and hurls him off the stage onto a table. Food and drinks go flying. So do the Loons who were sitting there. The table's at the end of a branch -- it bounces as Red lands.

Dag jumps from the stage to the table -- bending the branch down further. As he lands briefly...

DAG (CONT'D)
And stay out!

Dag jumps off. The branch snaps back up, catapulting Red into the air. Everyone in the club watches Red rise up, up, up...

CRUNCH. Red SLAMS against an overhanging buttress. Everyone watches him tumble down, down to the street below.

Mack smiles at Paulie...

MACK
So much for your chump, sorry, champ.

Paulie fixes Mack with a beady, malevolent glare... then spreads his wings and dives to help his fallen champion.

CAMERA-LENS POV - LONG SHOT of the chaos in the club. The CAMERA IRIS ADJUSTS and ZOOMS IN ON DAG...

REVERSE SHOT - of a hole in the trunk of the Birdland tree, high above the club floor -- the penthouse. TWO ORANGE EYES GLOW within the darkness, irises tightening to focus on Dag.

BACK TO SCENE: Artie and the crows put the bandstand back together. Flo and Mack support Dag as Bats and Johnny approach.

JOHNNY

Okay, that's it, you're outta here.

FLO

They were just trying to help. Which is more than some bats I know.

JOHNNY

Mind your manners, you're talking to a mammal.

FLO

Yeah, well, I didn't see any mighty mammals racing to my rescue.

(to Dag)

Thanks, honey, are you okay?

BATS AMORE

Not for long he's not.

(moving in on Dag)

That guy you just bounced...

JOHNNY GUANO

"Bounced," that's good, boss...

BATS AMORE

Do you know who he was?

DAG

No sir, funny, he asked me the same thing, not even he knows who he is.

BATS AMORE

He's Ready Red O'Reilly, the Rhode Island Redneck, the world bantamweight cock-fighting champ, that's who!

DAG

Well, sir, I couldn't have...

(delayed reaction)

The world-which what-fight who now?

BATS AMORE

Too complicated for you? How's this? You're fired. Heave-ho.

Dag is devastated. Flo and Mack hold their beaks as Johnny grabs Dag and spreads his wings to carry him out...

VOICE
Heave whoooooo-hooo?

Everyone's startled by the appearance of...

DON OWLEONE - owner of the bright orange eyes, an old, Brandoesque owl, soft-spoken and hard-nosed.

DON OWLEONE
No heave-ho without my say-so.
(stares at Dag)
Tell me, my cocky young hothead, just
whoo-hoo do you think you are?

DAG
Dagnabbit Shud...

MACK
(intervenes)
His name is Dag, sir, Dag, meet Don
Owleone. A-K-A the God-feather.

MUSIC UNDER - as Artie and the Crows play a plaintive Italian ballad to underscore the Don's scene.

DON OWLEONE
That was a very gutsy display, Dag,
knocking out the bantamweight champ.
You're an impressive young hooooligan.

DAG
Oh I just got lucky, sir. Most roosters
get pretty dopey this time of night.

DON OWLEONE
But not you. You're a natural nightbird,
aren'tcha? Rooosters like you are rare.
Have you ever fought professionally?

DAG
Cockfighting? Me? Oh, no, sir. I'm
just... well, like Miss Flo sings, "I'm a
lover, not a fighter."

DON OWLEONE
Miss Flo, hmm?

JOHNNY
If the Don wants you to fight, you'll
fight.

DON OWLEONE
Who-hoo asked you? You heard the bird.
Can't make him fly against his nature.

DAG
Especially when he can't fly.

DON OWLEONE
I like you, rooster. Tell me, can I help
you in any way?

DAG
I'm just happy to be here, sir. Of
course, I'd love to work with the band.

DON OWLEONE
 I'll talk to Artie. And perhaps one day
 I will ask a favor in return.

As the old owl turns from Dag, he murmurs to Bats...

DON OWLEONE (CONT'D)
 There's more than one way to pluck a
 chicken.

EXT. HOTEL BROADWAY - DAWN

A vertical neon sign blinks "HOTEL". In the channel between
 the sides, nest-boxes rise up like Japanese hotel-cubicles.

In the lowest "room," our friend Homer is waking up. He
 waddles to the open front of his cubicle -- turns his
 tailfeathers to us, squats over the edge. As we PAN UP away
 from the pigeon going potty, we hear...

PEDESTRIAN BELOW (O.S.)
 Hey! Yuck...

We RISE PAST other RESIDENTS -- pigeons waking up -- a
 nightingale gargling on her way to bed -- two lovebirds
 cuddling and cooing -- and finally, at the top...

DAG lies in his cubicle, listening. The morning birds CHIRP.
 Sirens BLARE. TRAFFIC builds. He stares over the waking
 city, toward the farm he left behind. Garish neon flashes
 across his face. Alone for the first time, Dag looks scared.
 He pulls a POSTCARD from beneath his pillow, starts writing.

DAG (V.O.)
 Dear Penny -- well, I got work! At
 Birdland! It's been some night, but
 Penny, you're gonna love it here...

CUT TO:

THE SAME SCENE, UPSIDE DOWN

REVEAL JOHNNY GUANO hanging from a nearby tree branch,
 watching Dag. He squints in the rising sunlight, pulls
 sunglasses from beneath his wing and puts them on.

JOHNNY'S POV - of Dag, now shaded in night-vision green.

INT. DAG'S ROOM- MOMENTS LATER

Homer takes Dag's postcard, puts it in his bag.

HOMER
 Okay, I'll get it to her pronto. And
 make sure she gets to you.

DAG
 Thanks, Homer.

HOMER
 Dude, we're all in the same flock, right?

He spreads his wings and takes off.

EXT. ABOVE THE CITY - EARLY MORNING

Homer soars above the skyscrapers...

DAG (V.O.)
The city's like nothing you ever saw. I
can't wait for you to get here.

EXT. FARMLAND PASTURES - DAY

Homer flies above a pastoral landscape. He squints, puzzled.

HOMER'S POV - Dag's farm is now surrounded by BARBED-WIRE
FENCING. Signs warn: KEEP OUT... UNDER CONSTRUCTION...
PLUCKETT'S POULTRY IS EXPANDING! Flying lower, Homer sees...

The Farmer and his Wife load furniture and boxes loaded on
their rickety truck... while Pluckett watches from his big
car, smiling as two of his MEN load cages onto another truck.
Homer heads in for a landing...

EXT. THE FARM - DAY

The cages on the truck are full of HENS... including Penny.

PENNY
Homer? Homer!

HOMER
Hey Penny -- special delivery.

He passes postcard through the bars. She passes one back.

PENNY
Thank goodness, can you get this to Dag?
They lost the farm! They're leaving.
And they're leaving us... to him.

She gestures up to the billboard above, where the giant Cap'n
endlessly chews his giant drumstick.

HOMER
No! We gotta get you outta here!

Homer starts to peck at the cage latch. Then... BLAM! He
YELPS and flaps wildly as a bullet just misses him.

PLUCKETT'S MAN
Scat, ya dang air-rat!

The Man holds a SMOKING RIFLE. He shoots again... BLAM!
Homer leaps into the air as the bullet whizzes beneath him.
With Pluckett's other Man in the driver's seat, the truck
REVS to life and starts to move. Homer flaps above...

HOMER
Don't worry, I'll get Dag...
(BLAM!)
Yow! We'll get you out!

BLAM! Homer soars skyward... as the gunman climbs aboard the
truck... and the truck heads out the gate.

PENNY
Hurry Homer! Hurry!

EXT. HOTEL BROADWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Homer lands atop the sign, hops into Dag's cubicle.

HOMER
Dag? Hey, Dag...

He notices a leathery black blanket spread over Dag's nest.

HOMER (CONT'D)
Love what you've done with the place,
sort of a cowboy goth vibe. Dag?

He doesn't see the "bedspread" start to enfold him -- as Johnny Guano sits up, wrapping his wings around Homer.

JOHNNY GUANO
He ain't here. Got called to work early.
Where ya been, pigeon?

He grins -- exposing those shiny fangs. Homer gulps.

EXT./INT. TREETOP LOUNGE - LATE AFTERNOON

The Crow Bar Band members are gathering, swilling coffee and warming up on their instruments, as Dag approaches.

ARTIE CAW
Well if it isn't Mister Steal the Show.
Meet the other crows, that's Russell on
drums-- Cheryl on keyboards-- and the Old
Crow himself on bass.

Russell and Cheryl wave. The Old Crow lifts a pint flask in toast, swigs some down.

ARTIE CAW (CONT'D)
The management tells me you're working
for us. But let's get clear here, you're
at the bottom of the pecking order, dig?
(illustrates on piano)
Here's me...
(plays high note)
Then Old Crow...
(lower notes)
Then Cheryl, then Russell...
(the lowest note of all)
Then you. Got it?
(off Dag's nod)
You just get what we need, sit in on
rehearsals and one day maybe -- maybe
we'll let you jam with us. Gotta work
your way up. Ya start out shovelin'
elephant poop -- but then one day --
you're the elephant. You dig, Dag?
(then, gently)
I heard you out there, you got a gift.
But you gotta learn to give back. You
wanna play jazz, you gotta be a team
player. Nightbirds look out for each
other. So just pay attention, dig?

But Dag's distracted by the arrival of... FLO. Even without spandex and spangles, she looks good. Maybe better.

ARTIE CAW (CONT'D)
 ...Dag? You dig?

DAG
 Hmm? Oh yessir, pay attention, I dig.

FLO
 Hi, boys, Cheryl! Hey, my hero! Never caught your name.

DAG
 (speechless with infatuation)
 D-d-duh. D-d-duh..

ARTIE CAW
 Dag, meet Flo, Flo, Dag.

FLO
 Nice to know ya, Dag.

DAG
 My p-p-puh. My p-puh-puh.

FLO
 Mine too. Thanks for putting that big cock-a-doofus in his place.

ARTIE & CROWS
 Yeah, his flat-on-his-face place! He had it coming! I was gonna take him out myself, but you beat me to the punch!

Dag basks in good fellowship. Flo pecks him on the cheek. He blushes through his feathers, as the Crows caw raucously.

FLO
 Aaah, they don't know squat about how to treat a lady. Chivalry was dead in this dump before you showed up. So thank you, my nightbird in shining feathers. You ever wanna go out after the show some time, I'll elaborate on my gratitude.

With a last, devastating wink at dumbstruck Dag, she's off to the dressing rooms. The crows are still cawing...

ARTIE CAW
 Okay, settle down, cats. Dag, you pay attention and work hard, and we'll all make some crazy music together.

DAG
 Work hard, yessir, I will.
 (still gazing after Flo)
 Mister Caw? Could I get tonight off?

The Crows grin and caw good-naturedly.

INT. BELFRY TOWER - NIGHT

UPSIDE-DOWN SHOT of sweating Homer finishing story.

HOMER
 ...and I said I'd tell Dag and we'd save her but if she's headed for Pluckett's I figure she's probably plucked already and that's all I know I swear please don't hurt me I got kids to feed!

REVEAL this time the bats are upright -- it's Homer who's upside-down, strung up with the strap of his own mailbag.

BATS AMORE
 You don't have any kids.

HOMER
 ...I know some kids.

BATS AMORE
 Okay, let him go, Johnny.

Disappointed, Johnny unstraps Homer who THUDS to the floor. Bats reads from the end of Penny's letter...

BATS AMORE (CONT'D)
 "Dag -- come back! Need your help!"
 (malevolent inspiration)
 Hunh. Johnny -- think you can forge this chicken-scratch?

JOHNNY GUANO
 Sure, boss.

BATS AMORE
 Let's put a "don't" here... and one here... and we'll add a nice P.S.

Off Homer, helplessly watching the bats hatch their scheme.

INT. FLO'S DRESSING ROOM

As Dag knocks and enters...

DAG
 Miss Nightingale?

FLO
 Dag? Over here. And call me Flo.

Dag looks toward a DRESSING SCREEN... just as a dress flips over the top. He gulps.

DAG
 Oh, I can come back later...

FLO
 Relax, honey, I'll be right out.

A slip flips over the screen. Dag tries to stay cool. Next... a bra. Dag's feathers ruffle.

FLO (CONT'D)
 Didja come to make that date?

Flo emerges in a kimono-style robe. Dag exhales loudly.

DAG
Oh, Miss -- Flo, believe me, I'd love to,
but... I got a girl back home.

FLO
But she's back home, right? And I'm
right here.

DAG
You sure are. But I'm kind of a one-hen
rooster.

Flo retreats, regards him with a new eye.

FLO
Fresh off the farm, aren'tcha? You are
adorable.

DAG
Thanks, Miss -- Flo. You, too.

HOMER (O.S.)
Dag? You back here?
(appears in doorway)
Oops, am I interrupting something?

FLO
Sadly, no.

HOMER
Dag -- we gotta talk.

Sounds urgent. Flo watches Dag exit with Homer. BLUESY
MUSIC UP: "NEW BIRD IN TOWN."

FLO
*New bird in town,
Dumb as a tourist,
Green as the purest cornball corn...
New bird in town,
Fresh as a farmyard morn...*

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DUSK

Homer and Dag perch beneath a gargoyle. Dag looks devastated
as he reads Penny's postcard. Homer avoids his pal's eyes --
he's a bad liar and feels awful about deceiving Dag.

DAG
"Don't come back. Don't need your help.
PS - I'll be safe at Pluckett's. A nice
rooster named Red has taken me under his
wing."

HOMER
Wow, that was fast.

DAG
Did you talk to her?

HOMER
No, well, yeah, I mean, not for long, she
just said, um, "Tell Dag I'm sorry."

DAG
Yeah. Me too.

As Dag turns away, Homer almost collapses with the effort of lying. Suddenly... Dag leaps off the ledge.

HOMER
No, don't, she's not worth... it.

Homer sees Dag has landed on another gargoyle right below.

DAG
I just need some alone time.

And he hops to a lower gargoyle... then a lower one... on his way to the street below.

EXT. THE STREET BELOW - TWILIGHT

MUSIC MONTAGE - As Flo sings "New Bird in Town", we see Dag and Penny, lonely and abandoned in their new homes.

FLO (V.O.)
*New bird in town, left on his own,
So lost and lonely
At every turn...*

CITY STREETS - DAG waddles past a movie theatre, looks up at the POSTER, a wedding scene -- the groom has his arm around the bride -- and the bride has her arm around the best man: "THREE'S A CROWD!" Dag moves on, nearly gets creamed by...

THUNK -- a pile of tabloid newspapers landing in front of a NEWSSTAND. Dag blinks at the headline: "JENNA CATCHES BRETT CHEATING!" He hurries on.

FLO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*New bird in town,
He's got a lot to learn.*

AT PLUCKETT'S - PENNY'S in her cage as the truck pulls into a LOADING DOCK. She looks up at the towering walls of cages rising on every side, like a maximum-security prison.

IN THE CITY - DAG avoids PEDESTRIAN FEET as he slogs through a busy intersection much like Times Square. Above him, brightly-lit billboards blare their ads:

For mouthwash -- "Can't Get the Girl? Get Freshex!" (Dag cups a wingtip around his beak, sniffs his breath.)

For cologne -- "She'll Never Tell -- But Maybe You Smell." (Dag lifts a wing, sniffs a pit.)

For jewels: "If You Don't Treat Her Right Someone Else Will." Dag sags, moves on...

FLO (CONT'D)
*So far from what you knew
So far from love so true,
So far from your old 'hood,
And so far, kid, not so good...*

AT PLUCKETT'S - GRINDING MACHINERY cranks up. Penny SQUAWKS as Pluckett's man lifts her cage and hangs it on a hook.

It swings and sways, tossing Penny back and forth, as it lifts her cage up, up, up to join the other prisoners.

IN THE CITY, Dag perches on a railing watching happy-hour humans going in and out of a bar. He sees a gentle tug-of-war, as TWO GUYS argue over who's taking a GIRL home. The Girl rejects one, heads off with the other. The loser stands helplessly as couples swarm around him.

Dag blinks away a tear. He knows how the guy feels. Then... THUNDER rumbles -- and rain starts falling. The two lonely hearts, rooster and human, are drenched.

AT PLUCKETT'S, Penny's cage drops with a CLANG into a space between other cages. She peers through the shadows at her prison-mates -- ragged roosters, hopeless hens, dead chickens walking. The huge metal door DROPS -- plunging Penny and the prisoners into darkness. MUSIC CARRIES OVER as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DON OWLEONE'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

A shadowy tree-chamber reminiscent of the Godfather's gloomy Tahoe spread. Cockfighting posters and celebrity-bird photos hang on the walls. Owleone sings to Bats, Johnny and Flo.

DON OWLEONE
*New bird in town,
 Innocent creature...
 He needs a teacher,
 Gentle but stern...*

Flo realizes he means her. She shakes her head, "forget it," and backs away... into Bats and Johnny.

BATS / JOHNNY
*Don't let us down,
 He's got so much to learn.*

OWLEONE
*Whooo knows, the city's nitty-
 Gritty might start lookin' pretty...
 Whooo knows, he may discover
 He's a fighter, not a lover.*

FLO
 Aw, leave the kid alone.

Owleone swiftly wraps a claw around Flo's neck.

DON OWLEONE
 Don't tell me what to do-hoo! Now here's the scoo-hoop. The title bout is coming up at Pluckett's place, and his boy Red has been a shoo-hoo-in. Til last night, when I saw our boy shoo-hoo the shoo-in out. I saw a chance to take the title from Pluckett at last. Lots of money to be made, Flo. We can all dip our beaks.
 (releases Flo, sings)
*New bird in town--
 New champ emerging!
 With the right urging...
 (to Flo)
 That's your concern.*

OWLEONE / BATS / JOHNNY
*New bird in town,
 We got a lot to... earn.*

INT. TREETOP LOUNGE - NIGHT

Mack anxiously checks his watch as the Staffbirds prep to open. He hears the elevator door open...

Drenched, raggedy Dag steps out. Mack hurries to meet him...

MACK
 Where ya been, you're late...

DAG
 Just a minute, Mack.

He struts past with unusual determination, as Mack follows.

INT. FLO'S DRESSING ROOM

Flo's at her mirror making up as Dag knocks and enters...

DAG
 Miss, um, Flo? Is that offer still open?

FLO
 How's tonight?

Flo smiles, stands, runs her wing through Dag's comb, gives him a lingering kiss on the cheek.

Mack watches from the doorway with mixed reactions -- surprise, worry, jealousy. Mostly jealousy.

MACK (V.O.)
 You ask me, you two need a chaperone.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dag changes from his busboy jacket into a tux. Mack paces.

DAG
 Aw no, she's safe with me.

MACK
 It's not her I'm worried about. Thought you was a one-hen rooster.

DAG
 Well, one at a time.

MACK
 (hands him a comb)
 Better comb that comb. You sure you know what you're getting into, kid? A date with Flo ain't cheap, how are you gonna--

DAG
 I thought maybe you could float me a loan til payday? I'm good for it.

Mack sighs, pulls out his wallet. As he hands Dag money:

MACK
Sure, kid, but is she good for you?

DAG
Whatsamatter, Mack, you jealous?

MACK
Me? Jealous? Of who? Me? Come on!

FLO
Ready, Dag?

Flo's at the door, radiant in clingy gown. Dag and Mack gulp.

INT. ELEVATOR

Cocky's riding Dag and Flo to ground level.

FLO
All the way down, Cocky.
(to Dag)
I'm gonna show you a side of the city not
many daybirds get to see. The underside.

Cocky pulls a lever, opens a trap door. Dag and Flo drop...

DAG
Brkaaaaaaaaaaaaa..... !

INT. SEWER PIPE

Flo and Dag slide through the twisting pipe...

INT. SEWER MAINTENANCE STATION

And land -- BOING -- on a big, discarded mattress in a dank cement chamber. NIGHTBIRDS flock everywhere, moving to...

WATER-TAXIS bobbing on a glistening river of sewage -- a fake pirate ship, a fake Egyptian barge, etc. The GONDOLIERS are costumed RATS, calling to the nightclubbers...

GONDOLIERS
Set sail for the Pirates Club! Take the
Ship of the Desert to the Oasis of the
Sewers! Nero's Castle, right this way!

Flo and Dag board a boat shaped like a tunnel-of-love swan. MUSIC UP as their little boat sails into the darkness and we start a jazzy MONTAGE -- Flo and Dag's big night out.

INT. SEWER "STRIP" - NIGHT

FLASHING NEON SIGNS, salvaged from the world above (pyramid, palm tree, skull-and-bones), reflect in the river of waste. Dag gapes, wide-eyed, as the little swanboat bobs along between rows of neon columns to "NERO'S CASTLE"...

IN THE BAR - a COCKTAIL BIRD serves drinks in blossom-shaped cups. Flo says, give it a try. Dag dips his beak... makes a yuk-face. Flo laughs and sucks her drink dry.

IN THE CASINO - Dag plays roulette. He wins! As Flo hugs him, he slurps a drink -- getting a taste for it.

FLO
*New bird in town,
 Lucky beginner...*

DAG
*Wow, I'm a winner,
 Money to burn!*
 (spoken)
 Let it ride.

Dag loses. As the stack of chips is raked away...

FLO
*New bird in town,
 You got a lot to learn.*

IN THE ARENA - Dag and Flo sit ringside at the cockfights. [Unlike real fighting cocks, our animated roosters wear boxing gloves on their wings, using their claws mostly for fancy footwork.] Ready Red O'Reilly, the hulking rooster Dag threw out of Birdland, is handily creaming a smaller rooster.

Flo cheers and shouts, totally into it. Dag cringes at first... then starts to air-box, wishing he could KO Red.

IN THE LOUNGE - Flo and Dag watch "COONEY & POSS, MAGICIANS"-- the Raccoon's sawing his silent partner in half. A COCKTAIL BIRD flits by, Dag grabs the drinks from her tray.

IN THE CASINO - Dag loses. Flo talks to the RAT CROUPIER -- who picks up a speaking-tube nearby. A camera turns its eye on Dag -- actually a periscope jerry-rigged from tubes and mirrors. We FOLLOW the elaborate periscope up, up, up to...

DON OWLEONE'S PENTHOUSE - where the owl watches a reflected image of Dag as Bats talks into a speaking tube.

BATS AMORE
 Sure, he works for us, give him as much credit as he wants.

BACK IN THE CASINO - the Croupier-Rat slides a new stack of chips to Dag, who can't believe how generous everyone is.

ACTION BLURS into swirls of light and faces as Dag bets -- the wheel spins -- he loses -- bets -- spins... until the WHOLE CASINO is spinning along with the roulette wheel -- and in a flurry of feathers, Dag passes out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY CORNER WITH DINER - NIGHT

Straight out of the Hopper painting *Nighthawks at the Diner*. ZOOM IN ON THE STEPS leading up to the door -- tucked underneath them is another, much smaller diner. The name, "Nighthawks," is painted over the window. Inside an actual NIGHTHAWK mans the grill as Flo and Dag perch at the counter.

INT. NIGHTHAWKS DINER - NIGHT

Dag guzzles coffee and water as he talks to Flo.

FLO
 How ya feeling, honey?

DAG
How much did I lose again? No, don't tell me. I kept thinking I was gonna win it back.

FLO
You and every bird in the house. I should've stopped you sooner.

DAG
Oh, no, Flo, I don't blame you. Say, you wouldn't want to maybe... go out again?

FLO
Sure.

DAG
And again and again? You wanna be my girlfriend?

FLO
Whoa, boy, one date at a time. I'll be your "Girl Friday," how's that?

DAG
That's great, Flo. You know, whatever tonight cost -- it was worth it.

Touched, Flo gives him a peck on the cheek. As we PULL BACK from the window into the surrounding night:

FLO (V.O.)
*New bird in town...
You've got a lot to learn.*

FADE TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - NEXT DAY

Dag's coxcomb hangs limply over his eyes -- and the rest of him looks pretty hungover, too, as he rides up with Cocky.

COCKY
Rough night, kid?
(off Dag's "shhh," whispers)
Sorry. Rough night?

Dag nods. Cocky opens the doors, and Dag steps into... Johnny and Bats -- who shove him back onto the elevator.

BATS AMORE
Boss wants a word with you.

INT. ELEVATOR / DON OWLEONE'S PENTHOUSE

The elevator doors open to reveal Don Owleone pinning a MOUSE to the floor with one claw.

MOUSE
It wasn't me, I swear it wasn't me!

DON OWLEONE
Could you give us a moment, Cocky?

Cocky nods, closes the doors. An awkward beat as they all wait. Dag reacts to blood-curdling MOUSE SCREAMS offstage. Cocky and the bats stay deadpan.

DON OWLEONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Okay, avanti!

Cocky opens the doors. No sign of the mouse, but the Owl is licking his claw.

DON OWLEONE (CONT'D)
Had to be done. He was a squealer.
(then, to Dag)
We meet again, my young friend. And in such a short time, you have run up a hooooo-huge debt.

DAG
Guess I got a little carried away.

DON OWLEONE
You spent like a drunken seagull.

DAG
Whatever I owe you, please, take it out of my salary.

Bats slides beads on a bird toy, using it as an abacus.

BATS AMORE
It ain't chicken-feed, chicky. Let's see, minimum wage times maximum hours, carry the six, you'll be all paid up in thirty-seven years.

JOHNNY GUANO
What about the vig, boss?

BATS AMORE
Oh, thank you, Johnny, yeah, adding the interest, that'll be -- fifty-three years. How long do roosters live anyway?

JOHNNY GUANO
Depends. On how quick they pay their debts.

Johnny grins, revealing GLEAMING FANGS. Reaches under a wing to pull out... a STEEL FILE. As he sharpens his fangs...

DAG
What are you gonna do to me?

BATS
This kinda money, we gotta at least break a drumstick.

JOHNNY GUANO
At least.

He lunges for Dag's thigh... but before he connects, Dag lets loose with a pre-emptive CROW of pain.

DAG
Rawwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwkagak!

The sound echoes loudly, making both bats cover their ears.

JOHNNY GUANO
Yow! Knock it off!

BATS AMORE
We got sensitive ears! That throat-a
yours is a loaded weapon.

DAG
I just don't wanna get... fanged.

DON OWLEONE
Perhaps I can suggest an alternative.

He gestures a wing towards one of the Cockfighting posters.

DAG
Cockfighting?! Aw no, like I told you...

DON OWLEONE
A lover not a fighter, yes, you seem to
have loved away a lotta loot last night.
And aside from the urgent question of how
you'll repay us... you need to consider
your own fu-hooture.

Dag nods, staring into the owl's HUGE EYES. Don Owleone's
unblinking gaze and mellifluous voice start to hypnotize Dag.

DON OWLEONE (CONT'D)
How do yoo-hooo hope to feather the nest
of Ms. Nightingale, who-hoose company and
tastes are, shall we say, not fru-hoogal?
Five fights and you've paid us off. Win
the title, you'll be roo-hoosting on a
mountain of moo-hooooolah.

DAG
(echoes, entranced)
Moo-hoolah.

DON OWLEONE
Yes, moo-hoolah. Now snap out of it.
(SMACKS Dag with a wing-tip)
Have we got a deal?

DAG
Sounds like an offer I can't refuse.

DON OWLEONE
That's the spirit.

DAG
I still don't know squat about fighting.

COCKY
You will.

Cocky Cacciatore steps out of the elevator.

DON OWLEONE
Meet your trainer.

EXT. ABANDONED PLAYGROUND - DUSK

Cocky leads Dag and Mack through rubble...

MACK
 ...Just think about it before you go off
 all half-cocked, no pun intended. Cock-
 fighting's a brutal... scary...

Mack and Dag stop short at the sight of...

ROOSTERS -- sitting silently around the shadowy, overgrown
 playground. On the jungle-gym bars. On the swing set. On
 the seesaws. They're everywhere. Just... brooding. It's a
 scene straight out of Hitchcock. And like the humans in "The
 Birds," Dag and Mack move past them very quietly. Then...

COCKY
 All right, lazybirds, up and at 'em!

Cocky's shout wakes the roosters -- they weren't brooding,
 just sleeping. As they rustle and stretch to life, Cocky
 points to a sign made from two other signs: "HOT WINGS GYM."

COCKY (CONT'D)
 Let's go, what are ya, a buncha daybirds?

Dag watches wide-eyed as the other Roosters ease into their
 routines... chinning on the monkey-bars, weight-training on
 the see-saws, sparring in a sandbox roped like a boxing-ring.

COCKY (CONT'D)
 'Course, most of 'em are daybirds. They
 gotta gobble chicken-speed just to stay
 awake. But you, you're a natural. Here,
 these should fit ya.

He hands Dag a pair of boxing-gloves. As Mack helps fit them
 over Dag's wingtips, Cocky picks another piece of gear.

COCKY (CONT'D)
 And try this on for size.

Dag reacts in horror at the sight of the MUZZLE Cocky holds.

DAG
 ...I have to wear that?

COCKY
 League rules, so you lugs don't peck each
 other to death. Relax, it won't hurt.

But Dag looks anything but relaxed as Cocky buckles it on.
 Now Paulie and Red enter the gym.

PAULIE
 Hello... Mack.

MACK
 Hello... Paulie.
 (Bogie)
 Of all the gym-joints in all the world,
 you had to walk into mine.

PAULIE
What brings you here?

MACK
My pal's training to kick your boy's
tailfeathers. Again.

Paulie and Red recognize Dag. Paulie's eyes narrow -- Red's double-comb stands up like demon-horns.

PAULIE
Oh, the battling busboy. You know you
just got lucky, don'tcha? You can't beat
Red in a fair fight.

DAG
Red? From Pluckett's?
(makes a connection)
Did you steal my Penny?!

PAULIE
Whoa, my boy didn't steal nothin'. But
if you're that hard up for cash...
(flips Dag a coin)
Here's a whole nickel.

DAG
I mean my girl Penny! At Pluckett's!

RED
(taunting)
Hey, all the hens go for me. I don't
always get their names.

Both roosters drop into fighting stance and face off, circling. Paulie and Mack move to pull their fighters apart.

COCKY
Okay, boys, save it for the ring.

PAULIE
(Mr. T)
I pity the fool fights us!

MACK
(Brando)
Yeah? My boy's gonna be a contender!

PAULIE
(Brando)
With a one-way ticket to Palookaville,
he's a bum, is what he is!

COCKY
Huh. Dueling Brandos.

Now Paulie and Mack are facing off like their fighters...

MACK
(Clint)
Ya feeling lucky, Punk? Well are ya?

PAULIE
(Clint)
Go ahead -- make my day.

...and the roosters have to pull them apart. As Dag pulls Mack and Red drags Paulie away...

MACK
(Arnold)
Hasta la vista, baby!

PAULIE
(Arnold)
Ve'll be back!

EXT. GYM - LATER

Cocky watches dubiously as Dag works out on a punching-bag -- a STUFFED RUBBER CHICKEN hanging from a jungle-gym bar.

COCKY
Okay, take a break. Your heart ain't really in this, is it?
(Dag shakes his head no)
Just as well, it ain't something you wanna do forever. Don't wanna end up punch-drunk. I know some old roosters can't tell a chicken from an egg. Much less which came first. They start forgetting things, repeating themselves, and you know... forgetting things, repeating themselves.
(off Dag's reaction)
Joke. I was lucky, I got outta the game before I got too goofy. But the sooner you're out, the better. Okay, try this -- think about somebody you're mad at.

Dag squints at the punching bag, where PENNY'S FACE appears.

COCKY (CONT'D)
Somebody you really hate.

Dag shakes his head -- he doesn't really hate Penny. So he imagines RED next to Penny on the punching-bag, grinning as he wraps a wing around her.

Dag snarls. His coxcomb rises. He pulls back and PUNCHES! The bag goes spinning around the bar.

COCKY (CONT'D)
That's more like it.

As Dag punches the bag harder and faster...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - AFTERNOON

Penny dozes in her cramped cage as LOUD MACHINERY grinds into gear. Her cage bounces and starts to move. Other hens start to SQUAWK wildly. What's going on??!!

WIDE-SHOT of the plant shows a whole row of cages now moving on a conveyor belt, toward a CHUTE. A METAL DOOR ROLLS UP to reveal a glimpse of the PROCESSING PLANT beyond-- flickering red shadows and an INFERNAL CACOPHONY of CLANGING MACHINES.

REVEAL Penny's in a row of cages moving toward the chute.

IN THE FRONT CAGE - A terrified hen presses into the back wall of her cage, SQUAWKING...

POV SHOT - through cage bars, crawling like a roller-coaster before the plunge. We move inexorably to the edge of the belt -- TIP off -- land with a CLANG in the chute -- and slide down, down into the gaping maw of the processing plant.

PENNY cowers in her moving cage, covering her ears against the din of GRINDING GEARS and CRAZED CHICKENS.

EXT. GYM - LATE AFTERNOON

Cocky watches Dag tapping lamely at the bag.

COCKY
You don't exactly have the killer
instinct, do ya?

DAG
I tried to tell them, I'm a...

COCKY
Lover not a fighter, yeah, okay, Plan B.
You like music, right? So let's teach
you to dance.

CUT TO:

A RECORD spinning on old phonograph near the ring. A scratchy version of NEW BIRD IN TOWN plays.

Cocky and Dag sing as they dance around the ring. Cocky feints and keeps the rhythm as Dag ducks and skips away.

DAG
*New bird in town...
Stronger each minute...
I'm gonna win it!*

COCKY
*Keep moving... turn!
Keep your head down!*

Dag ducks -- then looks up to Cocky for approval. Instead... POW! He gets a glove to the beak.

COCKY (CONT'D)
You got a lot to learn.

DAG
(dazed and exhausted)
Whew -- I can't keep this up all night.

COCKY
You won't have to.

CUT TO:

A BAGFUL OF COLORFUL SEEDS as Cocky spills some to show Dag.

COCKY (CONT'D)
It's that chicken-speed I told ya about.

DAG
You don't want me to use it!

COCKY

Nah, that's the beauty part, you don't need it. Most of these daybirds have to use something, just to keep 'em going.

He points out other ROOSTERS around gym -- ONE is gobbling chicken-speed -- ANOTHER guzzles from a "Starcock's" cup -- a third is bending over to get an injection in his tailfeathers from a STORK, who uses a reluctant hummingbird as a needle.

COCKY (CONT'D)

Chicken-speed... caffeine-a-cino... rooster-booster shots. Now let's say somehow they don't get the right pick-me-up to wake 'em up... they'll run outta steam in no time. All you gotta do is keep dancing til they droop, then-- blam! Go in for the kill.

DAG

But isn't that cheating?

COCKY

The guys who use this stuff are cheating. We're just-- un-cheating. You heard of the rope-a-dope? Well, this is the just-say-nope-to-dope.

Dag smiles, starting to get the idea...

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - DUSK

The machinery stops CLANGING -- the cages stop moving -- the chickens settle.

In her cage, Penny sighs with relief... until she sees -- she's now just a few cages away from the fatal drop-off.

PENNY

Aw Dag, where are you?

The question echoes in the sudden silence. Then...

VOICE (O.S.)

Penny?

Penny looks up -- did she really hear that?

PENNY

Dag?!

VOICE (O.S.)

Nah, it's just me...

We TRACK up a long duct, through fan blades to find...

EXT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - ROOFTOP - DUSK

HOMER on the roof, calling down through an air vent.

HOMER

...Homer.

In b.g. fans spin, chimneys spew smoke and that big billboard keeps cranking -- a NOISY MOTOR moves giant Pluckett's giant hand, lifting that giant drumstick up and down and up...

PENNY (O.S.)
Homer? Oh thank goodness, where's Dag?

HOMER
Um, he can't make it, Pen, he's uh, in a little jam of his own, but never fear, Homer's here, I'm gonna get you out!

PENNY (O.S.)
...How?

Her plaintive question echoes up the vent -- how, how, how?

HOMER
Right. How.

He looks down the vent -- fan blades block the way. Looks around the roof -- smokestacks belching smoke... a few sealed skylights... no way in or out. Suddenly the roof RUMBLES -- fan blades spin faster-- the plant's cranking up again...

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY

Penny's cage STARTS MOVING on the conveyor. As the cages ahead of her head for the Chute of Death...

PENNY (O.S.)
Help!

EXT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - ROOFTOP - DUSK

Homer launches into the air, flies to...

THE BACK OF THE BILLBOARD -- where a motor turns a rubber belt that moves the giant hand out front.

Homer lands on the moving belt... skitters... then clamps his claws around the belt. He beats his wings against the air as he strains to pull the belt off its gears...

...and finally yanks it off-center, onto the sharp edge of a gear. The belt starts to SHRED... then RIPS! Homer flaps wildly backwards and does a midair somersault to avoid the torn belt snapping back at him.

ON THE BILLBOARD - The giant hand falls limp, and the huge drumstick drops out... CRASH! Through a skylight, into...

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - CONTINUOUS

Glass SHATTERS and the big drumstick falls straight into the main bank of CONVEYOR BELT GEARS -- which GRIND and SCREECH, chewing up the drumstick til only the bone sticks out.

The conveyor belts lurch to a stop... and so does Penny's cage, teetering on the edge of doom. A moment of silence, then... the CHICKENS erupt in giddy CHEERS AND LAUGHTER. Homer flutters down from the broken skylight...

PENNY
Homer! Over here!

He flies to join her, lands on atop her cage -- the wrong end, making it tilt over the edge. So he hops to the other side, weighting it down.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Thanks.

HOMER

Let's just get -- you -- outta -- here.

He pulls on the bars of Penny's cage, trying to widen the gap... can't do it. Turns to the door -- sticks his beak into the keyhole, tries to pick the lock... and gets stuck. Struggles to free his beak, pushing against the cage with his claws. POP! He's free... but the cage tips dangerously.

Homer flattens his back against the cage and, flapping valiantly, pushes it back to safe ground. Whew. Then...

The MAIN DOOR of the plant ROLLS UP to admit Pluckett and his Men, checking out the noise. As usual, Paulie rides on Pluckett's shoulder while Red and General Lee follow at his heels. The Men tote rifles and flashlights, spraying bright beams around the cages like searchlights at a prison break.

CAP'N PLUCKETT

What in tarnation....?!

He sees the drumstick and the damage done. Hears chickens still cheering and laughing.

CAP'N PLUCKETT (CONT'D)

Awright, hush, ya dumb clucks!

One Man SHOOTs into the air. BLAM! The chickens go silent.

CAP'N PLUCKETT (CONT'D)

That's better. Now how soon can we fix this mess and git up and runnin' again? We got chickens to fry!

Penny looks at Homer anxiously. He looks back helplessly... then ducks behind her cage as flashlight beams sweep past.

MUSIC UNDER: the OPENING FANFARE of the "ROCKY" THEME.

CUT TO:

DAG'S TRAINING MONTAGE - MUSIC builds as we find Dag at...

EXT. GYM - LATE AFTERNOON

He pushes against a bar attached to the playground whirlygig while he runs in circles. Cocky rides the whirlygig, crowing encouragement along with the MUSIC:

COCKY

Gonna fly now! Gonna fly now!

DAG

(panting)
Very... funny...

ANOTHER PART OF THE GYM - Mack and Cocky watch Dag pounding the rubber chicken unenthusiastically. Cocky stings him

EXT. ACME NOVELTY WAREHOUSE - DUSK

Mack's intrigued, Dag puzzled as Cocky leads them through the fence-bars, into the dark, looming building.

INT. ACME NOVELTY WAREHOUSE

Shelves and racks full of gag toys. Cocky leads Dag to an area where rubber chickens hang with other birds like the slabs of beef in Rocky Balboa's freezer. Dag checks out the rubber roosters... ducks... BATS. Dag's eyes narrow ...

BLAM-BLAM-BLAM - Dag beats up on a rubber bat with new ferocity, as Cocky shouts encouragement.

ANOTHER PART OF THE WAREHOUSE - Mack's in prankster heaven as he's surprised by a pair of wind-up teeth... fooled by a pool of fake vomit... delighted by a shelf of whoopie cushions, which FART-FART-FART as Mack hops from one to the next.

LATER - the rubber bat is in shreds as Dag cools down, Cocky massaging his shoulders. Mack raises a camera to capture the moment. Dag and Cocky smile -- and get SPRAYED WITH WATER from Mack's gag camera.

AT THE CITY LIBRARY - Dag looks up at the endless stairway leading up to the library entrance. Dag looks at Cocky -- I can't do this. Cocky urges him on. Dag jogs forward... then backward to tell Cocky -- nope, really can't do this. Cocky pushes him forward... and Dag starts up the stairs.

AT THE GYM - Cocky sits on a see-saw while Dag strains to push the other end down -- lifting Cocky into the air.

BACK AT THE LIBRARY - Dag's running up those stairs again, breathing hard, eyes closed. He hits a landing -- stops -- turns -- opens his eyes to see Cocky, way down at the bottom of the stairs, cheering him on. Dag grins, turns back, looks up -- then sags as he sees... the ENDLESS STAIRWAY upward. It looks longer than ever.

AT THE GYM - Cocky and Mack give Dag a leopard-spotted, hooded boxer's robe. Dag unfurls it to reveal the name on the back: KID BANTAM. Cocky and Mack turn to reveal their jackets are also proudly emblazoned KID BANTAM.

THE MUSIC CRESCENDOES as we hit the library stairs again -- A POV shot climbing up, up, up... to the top of the stairs! We spin to see the WHOLE CITY spread out below. REVEAL...

We're sharing the POV of a HUMAN BOXER (call him "ROCKY.") He raises his arms in triumph, on top the world. Then...

"ROCKY"

Yo! Check out the chicken!

And here comes Dag, dragging and huffing up the final few stairs. He hits the top and collapses, exhausted.

"ROCKY" (CONT'D)

Yo, you got a lotta noive, boid.

He picks Dag up... and raises the rooster over his head, a double-victory gesture. Dag grins goofily as Rocky jumps...

DAG'S POV - the whole city rolling out below him as the ROCKY THEME CLIMAXES and our musical sequence ends...

DAG
Hey Cocky, I'm flyin'! I'm flyin'!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GYM - DUSK

As Homer lands -- looks around til he spots -- a figure in that hooded "Kid Bantam" robe, shadow-boxing in a corner.

HOMER
Hey, Dag. Don't turn around, I can't look you in the eye, just listen. Penny didn't really write that letter about Red and "don't come back," the truth is, she's in trouble, Dag, big...

The figure turns to reveal the face under the hood. It's not Dag -- it's Johnny Guano. Gulp.

HOMER (CONT'D)
...trouble. Hiya Johnny, that robe looks good on you.

JOHNNY GUANO
Hiya -- stool pigeon. You know what happens to stool pigeons?

HOMER
They get their wings clipped?

Johnny smiles -- showing his FANGS. As he closes in on Homer, we hear RADIO STATIC and RAT-A-TAT-A-TAT sound FX...

WOODY WINCHELL (O.S.)
They call him Kid Bantam, the newest student of the sweet science...

EXT. RADIO STUDIO - DAY

Nestled in an antenna tower, Radio KJAY is on the air. Woodpecker WOODY WINCHELL punctuates his patter with PECKING.

WOODY WINCHELL
...who graduates to the pros tonight.
(PECK-PECK-PECK)
Trained by Cocky Cacciatore, three-time-champ from way-back-when...
(PECK-PECK-PECK)
Kid Bantam is fresh meat, or should I say poultry, and he's likely to get tenderized by tough bird Apollo Loco, a-k-a the Mexican Madman. Who will slaughter whom? Yours truly Woody Winchell will be there to find out, see you at the fights!

Woody DINGS a BELL and starts a record playing. MUSIC UP ("NEW BIRD IN TOWN") as we DISSOLVE INTO:

A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED BOXING MOVIE MONTAGE - in SEPIA TONES and BLACK-AND-WHITE, with the occasional splatter of RED.

IN THE LOCKER ROOM - CLUCKER LANG is a huge black rooster with his coxcomb plastered into a Mr. T. mohawk. His big cup of Starcock's coffee sits on a table next to him.

Mack approaches with his own cup. He peels off the "DECAF" label and places his cup on the table next to Clucker's. Mack points at something to distract Clucker. The big rooster looks away -- Mack switches coffee-cups.

But Clucker suspects the switch, points to distract Mack... and switches the cups back. Mack points again -- this time, he doesn't switch. When Clucker repeats the gag and switches the cups, he ends up with Mack's decaf.

IN NERO'S ARENA - Dag and Clucker slug it out. Dag's on the ropes -- only saved by the BELL. He staggers back to his corner, where Cocky sponges his black eye...

DING! The bell rings -- Dag rises -- but Clucker doesn't. The big guy has dozed off on his stool. Clucker's TRAINER tries to rouse him -- but only succeeds in pushing him off the stool. Clucker falls flat on the canvas, sound asleep. Dag raises both wings, parades around the ring, victorious...

AT BIRDLAND - FLASHBULBS POP and nightbird FANS surround Dag, now wearing a two-tone Ricky Ricardo jacket and a big shiner. Mack approaches for a congratulatory hug -- but Dag shines him on as he pushes ahead toward Flo, who waits with wings outstretched. They hug as Mack watches, hurt. Dag grabs a bottle of champagne from the tray of a passing Waitbird...

POP! The bottle overflows with happy bubbles as MUSIC FADES.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DON OWLEONE'S PENTHOUSE

Owleone's opening the Don's Perignon and filling acorn-cups, as Bats finishes counting money.

BATS AMORE
All here, boss.

As everyone takes a cup of champagne, Owleone raises his...

DON OWLEONE
We never doubted you-hoo. To Kid Bantam!

Flo, Mack, Cocky, Bats and Johnny join the toast.

MACK
And to the happy end of a great career.

DON OWLEONE
"End?" Who-hoo said anything about end?

MACK
Well, Dag did, remember? He's gonna quit fighting once his debt's paid, which is now, so...
(lifts cup)
Ta-daaa!

FLO
 Quit now? You gotta be kidding.
 (wing around Dag)
 You're just getting started, aren'tcha?

DAG
 Come on, Mack, I can't stop now. The
 championship, you know what that means?

FLO
 A million smacker purse is what it means.

MACK
 Yeah, of which you get what?

DAG
 Twenty percent. Almost half, right?

Owleone, Bats and Johnny all nod vigorously.

MACK
 But you're a lover -- not a fighter.

DAG
 (hugs Flo)
 Gee, Mack... can't I be both?

BATS AMORE
 Attaboy. To the next World Champion!

Flo cuddles Dag as all toast -- even, reluctantly, Mack.

EXT. CATHEDRAL LEDGE - NIGHT

Dag, Mack and Cocky perch beneath a gargoyle overlooking the
 city streets, a little worse for the champagne.

DAG
 You get it, don'tcha, Cocky? This is no
 time to quit.

COCKY
 I gotta vote with the mockingbird on this
 one, kid. The longer you stay in the
 game, the more chance you'll get sucker-
 punched in the head.

MACK
 Or the heart.
 (off Dag's look)
 Forget it.

DAG
 I could be lucky, like Cocky.

COCKY
 Everybody's luck runs out sometime.
 Energy, too. I gotta hit the hay. And
 you gotta do what you gotta do. See ya
 tomorrow, kid.

Cocky moves off into the shadows beneath the gargoyles...

DAG
Listen, Mack, now I can start making some
real money. Even keep some of it!

MACK
(nods, deadpan)
Almost half.

DAG
And that won't hurt, with Flo and all.

MACK
Yeah, no dough, no Flo.

DAG
Yeah...Hey, whaddya mean? You saying Flo
only loves for my money?

MACK
No, no, no. Not only.
(Robin Leach)
There's also the free fight tickets, the
best tables and all the fabulous perks of
the lifestyle of the rich and famous.

DAG
You think she's some kind of... fly-by-
night... golddigger?

MACK
No! I know she is.

DAG
Take it back.

MACK
Kid, I'm only trying to...

DAG
(collars Mack)
Take it back!

MACK
Okay, okay, Flo's a peach, she loves you
just for being you.

DAG
(ignores sarcasm, lets him go)
That's more like it.

MACK
But ya still oughta quit fighting.

DAG
(tipsy anger)
Yeah well, you know what you oughta do?
You oughta stop telling me what I oughta
do is what you oughta do. Just keep your
thousand voices to yourself and let me
find my own!

MACK
You're not gonna find it with a muzzle on
your beak.

DAG
I'm a big bird, Mack, I don't need you
crowding me all the time.

MACK
...Well, I don't wanna crowd ya, kid. Ya
don't have to worry about that anymore.

He stands, flaps his wings... and tipsily falls off the ledge.

DAG
Mack...!

Mack rises back into view, hovering a moment...

MACK
So long, Dag.

He flies into the night sky -- leaving Dag alone.

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - DAY

Cap'n Pluckett inspects the fixed machinery.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
She's ready to go?

Off his Foreman's nod, Pluckett flips the ON switch. The
gears and belts WHIR into action.

Penny reacts in terror as her cage starts to move... off the
end of the conveyor belt... toward the Chute of Doom. Penny
sticks her feet through the bars and frantically runs against
the moving belt... but she can't hold out much longer...

CAP'N PLUCKETT (CONT'D)
Okay, shut her down.

The machinery stops. Penny collapses, relieved.

CAP'N PLUCKETT (CONT'D)
Quittin' time, boys, we got a big night
ahead. Y'all ready to rumble?

Pluckett's men WHOOP and rush to new tasks -- transforming
the plant into an arena.

SERIES OF DISSOLVES: As some men set up a cockfighting
ring... others set up risers and chairs... some lay bets with
Cap'n Pluckett... and two men hoist a painted banner reading:
WORLD BANTAMWEIGHT COCKFIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP.

As Pluckett takes bets, Red and Paulie confer at his feet.

RED
It's time to pick my prize, Paulie.

PAULIE
Okay, you can pick her -- but ya can't do
anything with her until...

RED
...after the fight, I know.

PAULIE
(Burgess Meredith)
Hens weaken legs. Hens weaken legs.

RED
And I know just which hen I want.
(calls out)
Any of you chicks know a cluck named Dag?

PENNY
Dag? Have you seen him? Is he okay?

Red zeroes in on our Penny in her cage -- calls back:

RED
Not for long, baby. I'll see you after
the fight.

EXT. GYM - AFTERNOON

Dag's working out on the rubber-chicken punching-bag, as
Cocky holds it from behind. As he jabs the bag:

DAG
Shoulda heard -- what he said -- about
Flo -- who does he -- think he is anyway?

COCKY
Okay, easy, save some for the fight.

DAG
(keeps punching hard)
I mean -- the nerve of -- that guy --
tellin' me -- what to do -- and when to
quit -- and who to date!

Cocky sticks his head around the side of the bag.

COCKY
Okay, that's enough, kid...

POW! Dag's hardest punch yet connects with Cocky's beak.
Off-guard, the old rooster sprawls and lies still.

DAG
Cocky! Aw no...

He kneels at Cocky's side -- hoists him into a sitting
position -- gently smacks his face with a wingtip.

DAG (CONT'D)
Cocky? Come on, Cocky, wake up now...

The old rooster's eyes blink groggily open. His head's still
spinning, and CARTOONISH CUCKOOS circle, COO-COOING loudly.
Then Cocky lifts a wing -- and SHOOS the cuckoos away.

COCKY
Stupid birds.

DAG
Cocky, are you okay?
(raises both wings)
How many wings am I holding up?

COCKY
That's easy, um... you know... what's the
one between one and three?

DAG
Stop kidding around, I'm worried.

COCKY
Relax, you don't have to worry about me.

Dag breathes a sigh of relief. Then:

COCKY (CONT'D)
Relax, you don't have to worry about me.

Cuckoos gather around his head once more. As he shoos them:

COCKY (CONT'D)
Say kid, what's your name again?

Off Dag -- devastated by what he's done.

INT. FLO'S DRESSING ROOM

As Dag barrels in, the dressing-screen wobbles -- as if
someone has just rushed behind it.

DAG
Flo! You here? I really need to talk...

FLO
I'll be right out.

Dag sees her robe slip off the screen... then notices a pair
of BOXER SHORTS also draped over the screen. The shorts are
decorated with little red bats. Dag watches them slowly slip
behind the screen. He hides his reaction as Flo emerges.

FLO (CONT'D)
Hey, champ, how ya feeling?

DAG
Not so good, Flo, Cocky's all messed up,
I think I hurt him pretty bad. And I
think I just got hurt pretty bad myself.

Without warning, Dag SLAMS into the screen -- pinning the guy
behind it to the wall.

BATS AMORE (O.S.)
Oooff.

Dag lets the screen fall -- revealing Bats in his boxers.

BATS AMORE (CONT'D)
Dag! Good to see ya, this isn't
necessarily how it looks. I was just --
inspecting the club for -- you know...

FLO
Moths.

BATS AMORE
Exactly!

DAG
Yeah? Where are your clothes?

BATS AMORE
(pretends surprise)
Man, those moths are quick.

Dag looks at Flo, who shrugs sadly...

FLO
I said I'd be your girl Friday, kid. But
the rest of the week's up for grabs.

Too hurt to respond, Dag turns to go...

BATS AMORE
See ya at the fights.

DAG
Forget the fights! Cocky was right.
Mack was right. I shoulda stopped when I
said I would. It's over. I quit.

And he storms out.

EXT. CITY STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

Dag trudges alone through the streets once more... past the movie theatre ("SHE DONE HIM WRONG")... past the newsstand ("BRETT & JENNA BREAK-UP BOMBSHELL!"). Through Dag's eyes, the Times Square signs now read: LOSER--DOOFUS--ALONE. Once again THUNDER rumbles -- rain falls -- and a TAXI blows through puddles in front of Dag, drenching him with water.

EXT. ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL - DUSK

Dag climbs the fire escape... past a sign pointing left: TRANSPLANT WING... a sign pointing right: THERAPY WING... to chalk graffiti reading "WINGS WING." An arrow points UP.

EXT. HOSPITAL ROOF - DUSK

An avian`clinic spreads across the roof -- injured birds lie in nests arranged around heating ducts, tended by STORK DOCTORS and NIGHTINGALE NURSES. Dag looks to find...

COCKY - his head bandaged, lying in a comfy nest.

COCKY
Dag! Hey kid, over here!

DAG
Cocky! How ya doing?

COCKY
Oh, fine, the doctors are great. Except
for the big bills. Get it?
(off Dag's look)
I'm okay, kid. I remember my name. And
yours. And you remember this guy?

HOMER
Hiya, Dag.

Homer lies in an adjoining nest, his wings in casts.

DAG
Homer! What happened...?

HOMER
I had it coming, I shoulda never lied to you. Look, Penny still loves you, you gotta get to Pluckett's and save her!

COCKY
Pluckett's? Hey, you should be there already -- you got a big fight to fight.

Dag and pals are startled by the arrival of:

BATS AMORE
Right. Whether you want to or not.

JOHNNY GUANO
Figured a sap like you would show up here. So we came to escort you to the championship.

DAG
I told you, I'm not fighting.

JOHNNY GUANO
Have it your way.

Johnny opens wide to reveal his gleaming fangs. Bats digs his claws into Dag's wings as Johnny moves in for the kill.

DON OWLEONE (O.S.)
Bats! Johnny! Release that roo-hooster!

The bats pull back, startled by their boss's voice.

BATS AMORE
But Boss, we thought...

DON OWLEONE (O.S.)
Who-hooo told you to think?

Now released, Dag can see what the bats don't -- it's not Owleone talking, but Mack imitating the old owl. Dag talks over Bats's shoulder, overplaying a little:

DAG
Thanks, Don Owleone. I'm just gonna leave now, Don Owleone...

COCKY
Dag -- whaddya mean, you're not fighting?

DAG
I can't, Cocky...

COCKY
Can't? You gotta! You promised. Lotsa folks are counting on you. Betting on you. Like me. A bird's word is his whatchamacallit, you can't run away now.

As Dag ponders this, Johnny turns to see Mack.

JOHNNY GUANO
Hey look...!

Bats sees him, too. Mack flaps away. Before the bats can follow, they're distracted by...

HOMER (O.S.)
Yo Bats, Johnny!

Painfully flapping his wounded wings, Homer hovers above...

HOMER (CONT'D)
I'll show ya a stool pigeon!

Bats and Johnny look up... and two BIG WHITE GLOBS of pigeon-poop drop onto their heads. Ugh, yuk! As they wipe their eyes, Mack calls to Dag from the fire escape:

MACK
Let's go, kid!

EXT. HOSPITAL FIRE ESCAPE - TWILIGHT

Dag runs down the steps as Mack flies behind.

MACK
Hope I'm not crowding you.

DAG
Aw no, Mack, I'm sorry, thanks...

DON OWLEONE
You-hoo're very welcome.

DAG
Man, you sound just like him, it's...

DON OWLEONE
Spoo-hoooky?

Dag runs smack into the real Don Owleone, blocking his way on the fire escape. He clutches Mack in one claw.

DON OWLEONE (CONT'D)
I don't really sound like that, do-hoo I?

DAG
Okay, let him go. I'll fight your stupid fight. And after I cream that chicken, I'm coming for you.

DON OWLEONE
I like your fu-hoory. Your limo awaits.

His eyes flash as he sinks his free claw into the scruff of Dag's neck. Owleone takes off, carrying Dag and Mack.

EXT. CITY - TWILIGHT

The streets below look far, far away as Owleone circles, his prey swinging from his claws. Suddenly he SWOOPS DOWN... and releases Dag and Homer.

FALLING POV -- Our heroes SQUAWK as they drop out of the sky and land hard, THUMP! A LID SLAMS DOWN, plunging us into...

INT. DARKNESS

Only the birds' eyes are visible.

DAG
Oof. Mack, you okay?

MACK
Umf. This is what I get for helping you.

DAG
Maybe we can open this thing...

The eyes close as the birds GRUNT and STRAIN against the lid.

EXT. CITY STREETS - TWILIGHT

They're in a basket-trunk attached to the back of Cap'n Pluckett's big black car. The lid pops up an inch -- but no further, thanks to a big padlock. Dag and Mack's eyes peer through the gap as the car glides away...

FADE TO BLACK

THUMP. THUD.

DAG & MACK
Hey! Ow! What the...?

Light floods in as the trunk is opened -- then tipped. Dag and Mack fall out into...

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - ROOSTER PEN

Chicken wire covers this pen on every side and across the top, which SLAMS down. One of Pluckett's Men padlocks it. They're trapped. Dag looks through the wire to see...

The whole vast prison of Pluckett's Poultry. Dag is horrified -- what kind of place is this?

Don Owleone steps into view, outside the wire cage.

DAG
Let us outta here!

DON OWLEONE
Sorry, no can do-hoo. Until you do something for me -- quid pro quoo-hooo.

DAG
I said I'd fight, what more do you want?

DON OWLEONE
I want you to lose.
(off Dag's shock)
You're very popular, my friend. So popular, the odds are five to two-hoo in your favor. Which means there's more to be made betting against you-hoo.

MACK
You can't do that.

DON OWLEONE
I already have. I bet you'll go down in
round two-hoo. So you're gonna go down
in round two-hoo.

DAG
Throw the fight?! What do you think I
am, some kind of human? No sir. You can
make me fight but you can't make me lose.

DON OWLEONE
Oh, I think I can.

He steps aside to reveal PENNY -- her wings held by Bats on
one side, Johnny on the other.

DAG
Penny!

BATS AMORE
So it's simple -- lose the fight, or lose
the chickie.

JOHNNY GUANO
Ready to rumble, rooster?

DAG
(gazing at Penny)
Yeah. I'm ready.

PENNY
Dag....!

But Bats and Johnny are dragging her back to her cage.

DON OWLEONE
Remember -- round two-hoo.

Off Dag, torn...

COONEY (V.O.)
Okay, it's time to pay for your ride!

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET NEAR BIRDLAND - TWILIGHT

Cooney takes money from ROOSTERS and other FLIGHTLESS BIRDS
as they hop aboard a LITTLE RED WAGON.

COONEY
Pay for your ride, buy your programs,
place your bets! All aboard the
championship express.

Poss stands nearby, selling programs and taking bets.

COONEY (CONT'D)
Okay, let's move out.

Poss climbs aboard a TRICYCLE hitched in front of the wagon.

HOMER (O.S.)
Hey wait! Wait for us!

Here comes Homer, his wings in slings, and Cocky, on foot. Cooney grabs their money and helps shove them aboard.

COONEY

Okay, Poss, you peddle, I'll push!

With a mighty effort, Poss starts peddling the tricycle while Cooney pushes the wagon from the rear. As soon as the wagon gets rolling, Cooney stops pushing and hops aboard.

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY

Mack is one glum prisoner as Paulie waddles up to the pen.

PAULIE

Always knew you'd end up as a jailbird. Sorry to hear your boy's going down.

MACK

Only to save his hen.

PAULIE

Rawk! And ya know what's funny about that? When my boy wins -- he gets the hen. Win or lose, your boy loses.

Paulie laughs raucously as he waddles away. Mack turns to see Dag's been listening.

DAG

In that case... I might as well win.

Dag look angrier and more determined than we've ever seen him. MUSIC UP - the *Intermezzo* from *Cavalleria Rusticana* -- a.k.a. Theme from *Raging Bull*.

FADE TO:

SMOKY BLACK-AND-WHITE - Dag shadow-boxes alone in the ring, wearing his spotted robe with the hood up, like a fowl deNiro in the famous opening image. FREEZE-FRAME - TITLES OVER:

KID BANTAM

WORLD BANTAMWEIGHT TITLE BOUT

We begin a SERIES OF DISSOLVES in B/W SCORSESE STYLE, full of slo-mo, freeze-frames and extreme close-ups...

Fight fans arrive at Pluckett's -- shadowy humans in the bleachers, birds sitting ringside. A gang of Amore's BATS perch on the pillars of the ring, guarding against trouble. WOODY WINCHELL sits ringside, broadcasting from a wooden crate labelled PRESS BOX.

Dag suits up -- Mack finishes tying the gloves, reaches for the muzzle. Dag grits his beak as Mack slips it on...

Red slams back Starcock's coffee, one cup in each wing.

WHISTLES and CHEERS as Dag appears. Blinding FLASHBULBS POP! FREEZE-FRAME PHOTO - Dag raising his wings, all pumped-up.

Dag climbs into the ring -- followed by his new corner-man, Mack, who gets awkwardly tangled in the ropes.

A MICROPHONE drops from above... into the paw of tonight's referee, Cooney. He even looks like a stripe-shirted ref.

COONEY

In this corner, weighing in at ten pounds
six ounces -- Kid Bantam!

(CHEERS)

In this corner, weighing in at fourteen
pounds twelve ounces, Ready Red O'Reilly!

Dag and Red tap gloves in a pre-fight "handshake." Back in his corner, Dag drops his robe. Looking good. Red drops his robe. Looking better. Plus he's caffeinated to his coxcombs which stick up like horns.

The BELL DINGS. Poss holds up a sign: "ROUND ONE." Red attacks first. Dag dances away once... twice...

WOODY WINCHELL

And the Rhode Island Redneck launches his
assault... but he can't touch the Kid,
look at that chicken duck.

KA-POW! Red connects. Dag STAGGERS IN SLO-MO to the ropes.

WOODY WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Kapow and ouch, talk about cold-cocked,
O'Reilly's got the Kid on the ropes.

Red POUNDS Dag -- until Dag ducks. Red keeps going, lunging into the ropes -- which stretch and bounce him back...

...but Red aims his legs squarely at Dag's chest -- oof! Dag sprawls onto the canvas. So begins a bruising round for Dag, fighting as if his life, and Penny's, depend on it.

LATER - Red's pummelling our hero hard as the BELL DINGS...

WOODY WINCHELL (CONT'D)

What's black and blue and has Red all
over him, it's Kid Bantam, and whew, he's
saved by the bell.

In Dag's corner -- Mack band-aids Dag's cuts and squeezes spongefuls of water over him.

In Red's corner -- Paulie rubs the rooster's neck while Red swallows more Starcock's.

DING! They're up again. Poss raises a sign: ROUND TWO.

SLO-MO SHOTS of Dag taking a beating. Feathers fly and float through the air. Red stomps on Dag's feet and slugs him into the ropes. Dag bounces back like a rubber doll -- and Red slugs him again. It's Looney Tunes meets Scorsese... until Red delivers a KILLER ROUNDHOUSE PUNCH. Dag bounces and crashes to the canvas. Cooney starts counting -- one, two...

DAG'S BLURRY POV of the crowd -- Don Owleone, smiling... Flo, fretful... Bats and Johnny, holding Penny in their clutches.

Dag struggles to get up -- four! five! The CROWD ROAR grows faint in his head, as he hears:

COCKY
You can do it, kid! You can do it!

Dag blinks his swollen eyes, sees...

HOMER AND COCKY -- ringside, bandaged but rooting loudly.

HOMER
Attaboy Dag, come on, get up!

Seven... eight... Dag drags himself to his feet. The Ref pulls back -- the crowd GOES WILD.

IN THE CROWD - Don Owleone scowls and seethes.

IN THE RING -- Red moves in on wobbly Dag... but Dag crouches to launch a head-butt into Red's gut. Red staggers back, off-balance, and SLAMS into a corner post. CR-RACK. That's gotta hurt. As he slides down the post, CUCKOOS circle his head.

IN THE CROWD - Penny's held by Johnny and Bats, who murmurs:

BATS AMORE
He wins, you lose.

PENNY
(shouts rebelliously)
Come on, Dag -- kill him! Decimate him!

In the ring, Dag looks around to find her... just as Red swats the Cuckoos and stands up. He barrels toward Dag... who turns back in the nick of time, and drops to his knees. Red's momentum carries him forward -- he trips over Dag and CRASHES onto the canvas. Dag jumps on top of Red, pinning him down. Spectators CHEER and lean forward eagerly...

PENNY (CONT'D)
Murder him!!!

SLO-MO - as Dag raises a glove to deliver the final blow... then STOPS. Instead of hitting Red, Dag sticks his glove under his other wing, yanks it off. Reactions change from YAY to HUNH? as Dag uses his free wing to remove his muzzle.

BATS AMORE
What the...? Get him, boys!

The bat guards spread their wings and launch. As they swoop towards Dag... he CROWS. The Bats put their wings over their ears... and drop to the ground, writhing in sonic pain.

Johnny releases his grip on Penny, but Bats struggles to hold on. Now Flo decides to help -- she sticks her beak into Bats' ear, and SHRIEKS a COLLORATURA HIGH NOTE. It's more than Bats can stand -- he releases Penny, covers his ears.

FLO
Move, girl! Go stand by your rooster.

Penny flashes Flo a grateful smile -- then flaps off through the crowd. Now Flo is startled by a voice behind her:

DON OWLEONE
Oh, Flo, that wasn't a very smart mooove.

Flo gulps as the old owl clamps a claw around her neck...

In the ring, Dag leans down, beak-to-beak with Red. As he reaches under Red's head, his opponent squirms...

DAG
Relax, I'm not trying to kiss ya.

...and he rips Red's muzzle off.

RED
What'dja do that for?

DAG
You're welcome. Now crow.

A beat -- then Red CROWS. A lovely, operatic tenor trill.

DAG (CONT'D)
Gee. That was unexpected.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
Fight, dammit!

Red CROWS again, right at Pluckett:

RED
I always wanted to sing -- but you made me fight.

DAG
Now everybody! Make some noise! Drive these bats bats!

Dag CROWS along with Red... and the other Roosters join in. The cock-ophony echoes through the plant. All the bats SHRIEK and flap wildly toward for the open door. Some fly into Col. Pluckett, who whacks them away...

PENNY
Dag!

DAG
Penny!

He sees her ringside, pulls her up into the ring. As they wrap their wings around one another...

PENNY
You really are a fighter.

DAG
When I'm fighting for what I love.
(then, to crowd)
Everybody! Listen!

The Roosters stop crowing. MUSIC UP. Dag sings: "NOBODY HERE BUT US CHICKENS".

DAG (CONT'D)
Listen, the clock is tickin'...

RED
I don't hear nothin'.

DAG
Listen, the time's running out...

Suddenly everyone's quiet -- listening to Dag.

DAG (CONT'D)
*There's nobody here but us chickens--
 And us chickens are stricken with doubt.*

Caged hens nod and murmur, "it's true, we are."

DAG (CONT'D)
*Listen! The tickin' quickens...
 We're sick an' we're under attack...
 But there's nobody here but us chickens,
 So it's time to stand up and fight back!*

ON PLUCKETT AND HIS MEN - baffled by the non-fighting cocks.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
 Fight, ya dumb clucks! What in tarnation
 you waiting for?

BACK IN THE RING - Dag sings to Red.

DAG
*Hey my fine-feathered brother,
 Let's stop fighting each other,
 Let's use our might the right way --
 To fight the man!*

ROOSTERS
 Fight the man!

OLD HEN
 But we can't...

ROOSTERS
 Yes we can!

DAG
 (sings to crowd)
*No more a henhouse divided,
 Let's cross the road with pride --
 Let's join one another
 And march to the other side!*

All the Roosters are getting excited now, CROWING enthusiastically as they batter against the chicken-wire.

Cap'n Pluckett storms to the ropes, eye-to-eye with Dag.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
 Who the hell you think you are, Rooster?

Dag looks right back -- extends a wing to TURN UP Pluckett's hearing aid -- then CROWS into the speaker:

DAG
 Dagnabbit -- Shuddup!

Pluckett is literally KNOCKED DOWN by Dag's volume. The chickens CHEER. As Pluckett's men help him to his feet...

CAP'N PLUCKETT
I'll kill you, bird, I will kill you and
chill you and chop you into nuggets!

ROOSTERS
Shuddup! Yeah, shuddup!

CAP'N PLUCKETT
You shuddup! I own you damn dumb birds!

ROOSTERS
Shud-dup! Shud-dup! Shud-dup!

Dag's name is becoming a gladiator rallying-cry, like
"Spartacus." As Pluckett shrinks back, Dag sings:

DAG
*Here's where the plot starts to thicken--
Here's where I give ya the scoop--
There's nobody here but us chickens,
And us chickens are flyin' the coop!*

ROOSTERS
Shuddup!

DAG
No, really!
*Chickens, no iron and brick can
Keep us locked up on the shelves --
But no-one'll rescue us chickens --
Time to start stickin' up for ourselves!*

RIP! A corner of chicken-wire gives way under the Roosters' battering. One pushes through -- then another. They grab the wire and pull, as more and more roosters break free. But most of the hens still cringe in their cages...

DAG (CONT'D)
You too, hens! Make noise, get mad!

MACK
Wanna get 'em mad? Leave it to me.

As Mack takes flight, Pluckett spots the escaping Roosters.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
Tarnation, stop 'em!

His Men grab rifles and start down from the bleachers...

High above, Mack lands near a fire-sprinkler. Plucks a piece of ACME FLASH PAPER from his pocket -- IGNITES it -- and holds the flame under the sprinkler. WHOOSH! The system starts up. Sprinklers spin and spray water over all the cages... making the hens wet, and, yes, mad. They start to CLUCK and rattle their cages.

The indoor rainstorm cascades down the bleachers. Pluckett's men slip and slide down the slick stairs. Other humans start a slippery stampede for the doors. Mack watches happily.

MACK
Mad as wet humans.

His smile fades as he feels TWO CLAWS sinking into his shoulders. Paulie Crackers has landed on him.

PAULIE CRACKERS
You are nothin' but trouble.

Mack pulls another packet from his pocket - ACME SNEEZE POWDER. He flicks it open as Paulie attacks... and EXPLODES! AAAACHOOO! CHOO! CHOO! Helpless Paulie releases Mack... and tumbles off his perch, feathers flying with every sneeze as he spasms his way to the ground.

In the ring, Dag and Penny shout encouragement to the Hens:

DAG & PENNY
Go girls! Rattle those cages!

Pluckett slips and slides his way to the plant control panel. He punches the "SPRINKLER OFF" button, grabs the "MACHINE ON" lever... and since he's soaking wet, gets ZAPPED with electricity. General Lee lunges to rescue his master, sinks his teeth into Pluckett's leg -- and gets ZAPPED himself.

The sprinklers stop. Pluckett's weight pulls the lever down. The MACHINES START as his hand slips free...

HENS SQUAWK as the belt starts moving. The OLD HEN from Dag's farm is headed for the chute -- but she SQUAWKS and rattles her cage so fiercely, it TIPS OVER THE SIDE...

Down below, Pluckett regains consciousness to find General Lee frozen in mid-chomp on his ankle.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
Let go-a me, you moron!

General Lee lets go. Then... WHAM! The Old Hen's cage drops on Pluckett's head-- he's down again. The cage hits the floor... the door SPRINGS OPEN... the Old Hen is amazed as she steps out to freedom.

OLD HEN
Hey, look at me!
(sings)
*Come on, my fine feathered sisters --
Let's fight the cap'ns and misters!
Shake yourselves free, and we
Can beat the Man!*

HENS
But we can't!

OLD HEN
Yes we can!

More Hens rattle their cages right off the conveyor belt -- onto Pluckett, his Dog, and his Men. Thunk! Thunk!

OLD HEN (CONT'D)
*No more a henhouse divided--
Let's cross the road with pride!*

HENS
*Let's help one another
And get to the other side!*

But one little Hen can't rattle free -- she's stuck on the conveyor belt headed for the chute...

DAG
Mack! Help!

Dag's struggling to pull the end of the chicken wire off the rooster-pen. Mack flies to help him. RIP!

As the little Hen drops off the end of the belt into the fatal chute... Mack swoops and drops the big chicken-wire net. It catches the Hen's cage... and BLOCKS the end of the chute. More cages drop and get stopped by the blockage -- creating a nice big traffic-jam in the chute.

Penny has found her way to a TELEPHONE. She knocks the receiver off the hook and pecks out nine-one-one...

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

As a DEPUTY answers the phone...

DEPUTY
Police.

He recoils from the FRANTIC SQUAWKING at the other end.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)
Whoa, ma'am -- calm down...
(covers phone, shouts)
Hey Marshall! We got an emergency, I'm
not sure what, but this chick's in pain.

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY

Penny backs away from the phone as Paulie approaches, still sneezing explosively. He leans into the receiver...

PAULIE
Help-choo! Pluckett's Poultry-choo!
Help, they're killing us! Choo!

Nearby, the Old Hen leads other fallen hens from broken cages to the plant door. One Hen carries an egg in her wings...

HEN WITH EGG
Women and children first!

Pluckett spots the hens escaping -- pushes the door-button -- and gets SHOCKED again. As the door rolls down, a few hens get trapped. Suddenly they're caught in a BEAM OF LIGHT...

DAG
This way, girls! Fly out the window!

Dag holds a FLASHLIGHT in his claws, uses it to direct the escapees up a flight of stairs to a small window.

HEN
We can fly?

DAG
Sure we can. We've just denied our true power due to social conditioning!

The Hen jumps out the window. THUD! Dag winces -- then explains to the camera:

DAG (CONT'D)
Without a false sense of security, she'd never have jumped.

FLO
Help! Help!

Dag looks up to see Owleone clutching Flo in his claws, as he dives straight for the open window. Thinking fast, Dag aims the flashlight at the old owl's eyes.

Owleone is blinded. His huge pupils shrink to pinpricks -- he SHRIEKS in surprise -- and releases his grip on Flo.

Before she can unfurl her wings, she's plummeting to the ground... until Mack swoops down to catch her.

FLO (CONT'D)
Thanks, Mack. I don't deserve you.

MACK
You got that right.

Owleone CRASHES into cages on the belt. As he recovers, Dag runs and leaps up to confront him.

DON OWLEONE
Bats! Johnny!

DAG
(moves in on Owleone)
They took off. Not so tough without your hench-bats, are ya? Yeah, you're real tough with the hens and the mice, how 'bout fighting a rooster your own size?

Owleone's backing away -- then reaches the edge of the belt.

DON OWLEONE
Okay, just stay coo-hool...

POW! Dag slugs him right in the beak. The Owl goes flying off the conveyor belt -- down the chute -- into oblivion.

DAG
Arrividerci, Godfeather.

BACK TO CAP'N PLUCKETT - as he struggles to his feet...

HOMER
Yo, Pluckett! Bombs away!

Pluckett looks up to see Homer hovering awkwardly above... and gets a generous dropping of pigeon-poop in his eyes.

Meanwhile, Penny perches on Dag's back to reach the RING OF KEYS hanging from distracted Pluckett's belt-loop.

PLOP! Another Homer-bomb lands on General Lee. He GROWLS and LEAPS at Homer, catching the low-flying pigeon off-guard. He chomps on Homer's wing-tip, shakes him back and forth...

Mack to the rescue. He lands on the General's back and whips another packet from his pocket -- ACME ITCHING POWDER. A quick sprinkling over the dog's back...

General Lee freezes -- whines -- releases Homer -- and starts SCRATCHING frantically as Mack and Homer make their escape.

Penny holds the Cap'n's keyring while Dag pulls off keys and tosses them to other Roosters. Dag hugs Penny as he sings:

DAG
I found my chick and unloosed 'er!

PENNY
*But the others are still in a fix.
Think there's nobody here but you roosters?*

ROOSTERS
Let's go save some chicks!

Dag, Penny and the Roosters flap, hop and run to different levels of the "prison" and start opening cages. The freed Hens embrace the Roosters -- then scurry to open more cages.

EVERYBODY
*Now we won't stand for slim pickins,
Now that we all know the score!
There's nobody here but us chickens,
And us chickens ain't chicken no more!*

EXT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - NIGHT

Bats and Johnny come in for a landing.

BATS AMORE
There's gotta be a way back in...

THUMP! Something flies out of a "WASTE" chute in the wall above and lands right in front of the bats. It's a big chunk of deep-fried batter -- shaped just like an owl with wings outstretched. The bats consider their boss's fried remains.

JOHNNY GUANO
Chicken-fried owl. Wonder what that tastes like.
(off Bats's look)
I was just wondering.

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY

Pluckett is apoplectic -- everywhere he looks, he sees hens hopping out of their cages.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
Stop those chickens!

Two of his men climb to the edge of the chute. One lunges to catch an escaping Hen and falls onto the cages that clog the chute. It's a little too much weight for the chicken-wire, which starts to give way. Another Man starts to climb in...

FIRST MAN
No, don't help meeeeeee.....

Too late. The chicken-wire gives way... and the cages tumble down the chute, with Pluckett's men aboard for the ride. As they slide down to oblivion...

DAG / PENNY / CHICKENS
We're gonna give 'em a lickin'!
We're gonna drive 'em all nuts!
There's nobody here but us chickens --
And us chickens are kickin' your butts!

Woody remains at his microphone amidst the chaos...

WOODY WINCHELL
 It's an unbelievable scene as chickens take over the poultry plant and their jailers run for cover, oh, the humanity!

HOMER
 (approaching him)
 Hey, could you help me with something?

EXT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Woody emerges through a crack in the boarded-up skylight -- and flies behind the PLUCKETT'S POULTRY billboard, where the giant Cap'n's arm still swings loosely from its bolt. Woody lands and starts pecking at the wood that holds the bolt. RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT...

INT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - CONTINUOUS

Pluckett rages at the free-ranging prisoners...

CAP'N PLUCKETT
 You can't escape, dang it! May the hand of God strike me down before I'll be beaten by a buncha bird-brain chickens!

CRASH! Pluckett looks up just in time to see... the giant billboard hand crashing through the boards above... into the plant machinery. With plenty of GRINDING and SMOKE, it all comes to a halt. The chickens CHEER, CLUCK and CROW.

EVERYBODY
You better not mess with us chickens,
We'll fry you eventually --
There's nobody here but us chickens,
And together we can be free!

BLAM! The jubilant MUSIC STOPS abruptly at the sound of a shotgun blast. The Cap'n has fired a warning shot. His remaining Men stand with rifles ready.

CAP'N PLUCKETT
 Now that is enough-a that.

The birds cower from the human weapons. Pluckett draws a bead on Dag and Penny...

CAP'N PLUCKETT (CONT'D)
 You two troublemakers ain't gonna make no more trouble for nobody.

As his finger tightens on the trigger... everyone reacts to the sound of SIRENS outside.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)
Open up! Police!

Mack flutters up to the door-button and kicks it. The metal door rolls up, revealing...

POLICE CARS outside, splashing red lights over the night. A MARSHALL and Deputy approach Pluckett...

CAP'N PLUCKETT
Everything's fine, Marshall...

MARSHALL
Afraid not, sir. Sponsoring cockfights is a crime in this county.

Pluckett turns to face the Marshall, and recognizes...

CAP'N PLUCKETT
Farmer Farmer?!

The Farmer now wears a Marshall's uniform.

FARMER
Marshall Farmer, now. Had to get a new job after you shut us down. Let's go.

He grabs Pluckett's rifle and produces a pair of handcuffs.

FARMER (CONT'D)
Just doing my duty, Cap'n, doing my duty.
(slapping on the cuffs)
You have the right to remain silent.
(as Pluckett starts to protest)
That means shuddup.

Chickens SQUAWK happily as Farmer drags Pluckett out.

CHICKENS
Shuddup! Shuddup!

EXT. PLUCKETT'S POULTRY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The plant is a circus of red lights and teeming feathers, as Farmer perp-walks Pluckett to the police car... followed by a torrent of hens and roosters, making their escape. Cooney and Poss stand by their tricycle-wagon, pitching:

COONEY
Step right up, buy a seat on the liberty limousine to freedom!

As chickens swarm their way, Poss speaks for the first time.

POSS
This time -- you pedal.

Exhausted, he flips onto his back, playing possum.

We find our heroes emerging into the night. Penny kisses Dag. Flo kisses Mack. Homer leans in to kiss Cocky, who gruffly shoves him away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BIRDLAND - ONSTAGE - NIGHT

We're back to Mack and his opening monologue. Now we notice the Treetop Lounge is packed with regulars and NEW CUSTOMERS-- the Roosters and Hens from Pluckett's.

MACK

True story. So now without further ado, ladies and gentlebirds and my little chickadees, here's the guy you've been waiting for. Hey chickens! Wake up! Can we get them some coffee? Here he is, the rooster who coulda been world champion but settled for king of cock-a-doodle-doodle-doo. He's still a champ in my books, so make some noise, this kid's something to crow about -- Dag Nabbit!

CHEERS as LIGHTS CHANGE -- we see Dag silhouetted behind the curtain. He lets loose with a BRASSY RIFF...

DAG

Bra-ka-kaw! Bra-ka-kaw! Bra-ka-ka-ka-kaw-ka-ka-kaw, yeah!

Curtain rises on Dag and band: "NOBODY HERE BUT US CHICKENS."

DAG (CONT'D)

*Some birds are smart as the
Dickens--* Yeah!

ARTIE & CROWS

DAG (CONT'D)

*And those birds have smartly
deduced...* Yeah?

ARTIE & CROWS

DAG (CONT'D)

*That there's nobody here but us chickens,
And us chickens are ruling the roost!*

Artie takes the vocal as Dag CROWS...

ARTIE CAW

*Yeah! We're alive and we're kickin',
Clickin' and cluckin' with glee --
There's nobody here but us crows --*

MACK / FLO / DAG

Mockingbirds! Nightingales! Chickens!

ALL

Nothin' but birds who are free!

SPOTLIGHT frames FLO AND MACK: "NEVER TRY TO CLIP MY WINGS." She cuddles him. He's embarrassed, tries to play to crowd.

FLO

*Found a mate --
Worth the wait --
He just might domesticate me...*

MACK

Birds, let's fight back!
(Flo pecks him)
Take the night back!
(another love-peck)
Please excuse us we'll be right back

Surrendering to Flo's embrace, Mack gestures "move the spotlight! The LIGHT MOVES to DAG AND PENNY: "IF I COULD FLY."

DAG & PENNY
*Now you and I
 Are finally together,
 Birds of a feather,
 We'll never say goodbye...
 And it's guaranteed
 We'll never need
 To fly.*

They peck -- and the CURTAIN RISES to reveal the Band, the Chorusbirds, Red, Mack, Flo, Homer, Cocky, even the Peacock.

RED
 (operatically)
We're -- here -- with -- the...

ALL
*Nightbirds!
 Here we're allowed to be nightbirds,
 Yeah and we're proud to be nightbirds,
 Stay up some night and see...
 That daybirds are okay birds,
 But nightbirds are the right birds
 To be!*

PEACOCK
 (off the beat)
 ...to be!

MACK
 (rolls his eyes)
 Pea-brain.
 (waves to camera)
 Th-th-th-that's all folks!

IRIS OUT.

THE END