



TERMITE TERRACE

by Charlie Haas

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Original screenplay by Brian McCormick

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EXT. KANSAS BARN - EVENING

A warm, cricket-sounding evening on a FARM, under a TITLE reading LYMAN, KANSAS - 1922. A dozen worn CARS are parked outside the weathered BARN, beside a covered TRUCK whose sign says LaVINE'S MOTION PICTURE SHOW. LAUGHTER inside the barn.

INT. BARN

A few dozen PEOPLE sit on benches. Their clothes and faces, like the cars outside, show the wear of farm and small-town life. But tonight those faces smile, taking time out...

...as a hulking PROJECTOR plays a FELIX THE CAT CARTOON on a white SCREEN tacked to the barn wall. The cartoon is crude, but exuberant with the still-young magic of animation, and helped by a PIANIST's accompaniment on an old UPRIGHT.

In the audience, seated between his PARENTS, is six-year-old PETE NUGENT. He laughs, but watches with something more than amusement -- a fascination, for keeps, with these drawings that move. As LIGHT from the screen plays over his face,

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WARNER BROS. STUDIO - MORNING

A sunny, busy morning at Warners' Hollywood LOT. A TITLE reads HOLLYWOOD - 1938. Outside, the Depression and Hitler besiege the world, but in here it's a Golden Age of prosperity.

PETE NUGENT, 22, has just walked onto the lot for the first time. His looks, like his personality, are okay but unfinished -- he hasn't quite jelled yet. He wears the full-cut suit and wide tie of the '30s, and carries an artist's portfolio.

Pete tries not to goggle at the passing PEOPLE -- some wonderfully costumed, others just well-dressed -- as he hurries into a big Deco BUILDING.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Pete approaches the RECEPTIONIST in the cool marble lobby.

PETE
Animation?

RECEPTIONIST
That's Gustafson Productions --
(points outside)
-- all the way down, on the left.

EXT. STUDIO - WITH PETE

He's followed the directions to the grungy back end of the studio. Old sets and props are dumped near a B-picture WESTERN STREET, where bored cowboy ACTORS idle between shots.

But the sorriest sight back here is a dilapidated two-story frame BUILDING with a flaking SIGN reading "GUSTAFSON PRODUCTIONS." As its nickname, "Termite Terrace," indicates, this place has been on its last legs for years.

As he starts inside, Pete is almost bowled over by the hurrying NED WELCH, 29, also going in. Ned -- compact, always deadpan -- carries a towel-swathed block of DRY ICE and a picnic hamper trailing a long string of FRANKFURTERS.

NED
Heads up! Hot soup! State
secrets!

Pete trips backward, recovers, and follows Ned into

INT. TERMITE TERRACE - RECEPTION AREA

A cramped, ill-furnished building. In a big framed PHOTO on the wall, MORT GUSTAFSON, the animation studio's owner, is shown seated at a drawing board, Speedball pen in hand. He smiles at the PORKY PIG he's apparently just drawn -- Porky, in return, gives Mort a jaunty salute.

Under the photo sits receptionist SHEILA AMIS. Pretty and 25-ish, she thrives on chaos, talking alternately to her phone headset and those around her.

SHEILA
(to headset)
Gustafson Productions... no, I'm
sorry --
(to Ned)
Ned, it's dangling.

NED
Thanks, Sheila.

He flips the wieners over his shoulder, almost hitting Pete, who ducks just in time as Ned goes down the hall O.S.

PETE
Miss, excuse me, I'm --

SHEILA
(to headset)
No, he doesn't work here
anymore... I know, I thought he'd
be one of the strong ones...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Enter CLARK CHAFEY. Dapper and 27, Clark sports a half-kidding patrician accent and persistent hangover. He TRIPS on the building's rotting front step, and half the COFFEE in his go-cup sloshes out, but he nimbly gets under it for the catch.

CLARK
(to coffee)
Stay.
(to Sheila)
'lo, Sheila.

SHEILA
Morning, Clark. Little hangover?

CLARK
Not yet, thanks. Should hit
around lunchtime.
(to Pete)
Don't know you -- right?

He goes O.S. before Pete can answer.

SHEILA
(to headset)
Gustafson --
(to Pete)
Yes, hon?
(to headset)
-- Productions...

PETE
I'm Pete Nugent, I'm supposed to
start working for Mister Edwards
today --

SHEILA
(to Pete)
Wonderful! Welcome aboard!
(to headset)
Gustaf -- No, I'm sorry, he's
gone home to his mother, and I
don't blame him a bit, poor
thing...

JERRY FLAHERTY, 30 but boyish, enters.

SHEILA (CONT.)
Jerry, this is Pete. Could you
take him to Slim's with you?

JERRY
Sure. Come on, kid.

Pete gratefully follows Jerry into

INT. CORRIDOR

Home-made GAG SIGNS and artists' CARICATURES of each other share the walls with paint cracks and water stains.

PETE

Boy, I can't believe I'm really here. I got in yesterday, it's amazing -- people going around in short sleeves in January, orange trees all over... are you an animator?

JERRY

Yep. Here, I'll show you something amazing.

He leads Pete to a doorway marked INK & PAINT. Inside are rows of WOMEN, mostly young, working on cels. CAMERA dotes on a few especially pretty women, who wave at Jerry.

JERRY (CONT.)

Is that something?

PETE

Wow. So they paint the actual cels in there, huh?

Jerry looks at Pete.

JERRY

Don't worry, son. One day you'll be flesh and blood, just like a real boy.

PETE

Oh. Oh, yeah, you mean all the --

But Jerry is already moving him on.

JERRY

You're gonna in-between?

PETE

Yeah. I got the letter last week, I couldn't believe I --

He trails off as they turn the corner and encounter two GUYS, one dressed as the POPE, the other as an assisting PRIEST. The Pope guy carries a bottle of Coke, and flings some anointing drops at Pete and Jerry as he passes.

POPE GUY

Dominoes Victrola, Mundi, Tuesdi...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As they depart:

PETE
Jerry?

JERRY
Mm.

PETE
Why was that guy dressed as the Pope?

JERRY
Catholic childhood, Pete. He's got a lot to get off his chest. This your first time working in an office?

PETE
Yeah.

Jerry nods, leads Pete into

INT. ROOM 15

A big, busy room where a dozen GUYS, including Clark and Ned, are working. There are drawing tables, desks, and, on the walls, CORK BOARDS with dozens of 3-by-5-inch GAG DRAWINGS pinned up. SPOT a few pieces of MERCHANDISE -- dolls, dishes, etc. -- with images of Porky Pig, BEANS THE CAT, and other early Warners cartoon stars.

At the cork board, Ned confers with two ANIMATORS:

NED
Look, the cat comes after the mouse with his tongue out, he twists up his tongue in the egg beater, ow!, it untwists, the cat lifts off the ground, smashes into the ceiling, the "No Sale" thing comes out of his head, the mouse grabs on the chandelier, the cat drops down -- boom, it's a crash like the Hindenburg.

ANIMATOR 1
That's not bad.

NED
It's what Aristophanes woulda done, I'm telling you.

OVER this talk, Jerry puts Pete at a drawing table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY
Here you go. You got a Scripto?

PETE
Sure.

He takes out a shiny new pencil-- Jerry takes it.

JERRY
Thanks. I put mine down
someplace.

CLARK
Jerry! This young man is our
guest. Young man --

Barely looking, Clark FLINGS a fresh Scripto toward Pete's nose, with the aim and velocity of a carnival knife-thrower. Pete catches the zooming pencil just in time.

NED
(indicates Clark)
College.

JERRY
Now, in-betweening is very
simple. Your animator gives you
a drawing of Porky Pig...

He hands Pete a drawing of Porky, starting a frantic gesture.

JERRY (CONT.)
... and another drawing...

Of Porky again, at the other end of the gesture.

JERRY
... and your job is the drawings
in between.

CLARK
A lot of drawings, frankly.

NED
That's right. You want it very
smooth. You think he's got it?

JERRY
I don't know. Here, look, you
take this position...

Using the first drawing as a model, they guide Pete into position -- but, in classic Looney Tunes fashion, it's a pose that no pig or person could really assume.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Pete gamely tries to contort his arms into boneless curlicues, his legs into a precarious tiptoe...

JERRY (CONT.)

... then you bring your foot up,
but the knee goes down...

Pete inches toward the even more impossible second pose.

GUYS

(variously)

Whoa! Easy! Little at a time!
There you go... you're a pig,
remember... no, your head stays
put, just your neck moves...

Pete's crash course in cartoon physics becomes just a CRASH -- he loses balance and falls to the floor, taking a desk caddy full of pencils and brushes with him. He's tangled up in table legs, covered with drawing equipment.

CLARK

(shakes head)

No shortcuts.

NED

Nice crash, though.

PETE

Thank you.

As Pete tries to get up, director SLIM EDWARDS comes in. Slim, 45, is the most inspired animator here but a haunted self-critic; a reluctant boss but a fierce protector of his troops against the "real" bosses in Administration. He carries a bright bird-of-paradise FLOWER in florist's paper.

SLIM

Morning, morning -- boy, I just
saw Weller over here... ?

As Slim speaks, he goes to his drawing table, where a BUD VASE sits in the inkwell hole. He discards a peaked bird-of-paradise and its water from the vase, replacing them with his fresh flower and water from a nearby pitcher.

SLIM (cont.)

...tells me these jerks are
putting the quotas up again,
we've gotta get an extra thirty
feet a week out? How they think
we're gonna do anything halfway --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NED
(clears throat)
Slim --
(indicates Pete)
New guy.

Slim has been turning his flower to the perfect angle in the vase -- he looks up, then down, to see Pete.

SLIM
Oh! Hi! Welcome!
(goes to Pete)
This is a great place to work...
Good to have you. Slim Edwards.

PETE
Pete Nugent. Mister Edwards --

SLIM
Call me Slim. That way, we
always open on a joke.
(indicates floor)
You draw like that?

PETE
No, just sitting down.

SLIM
(disappointed)
Oh. You know, the guy did that
whole ceiling that way, in the
church. With the hands?
(mimes Sistine hands)
People liked it.

Slim goes over to the corkboard, fidgets some gag drawings out of his jacket pockets, and pins them up. The other guys follow him over, and Pete brings up the rear.

SLIM (CONT.)
I had a couple ideas on this...

The guys react to Slim's drawings -- doing takes at the weirdness, then starting to laugh, except for Ned, who's deadpan as usual and pronounces:

NED
This is very funny, Slim.

SLIM
I don't know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Pete, at the back, can't quite see the drawings and doesn't get the gag-session drill. He goes back to his table to draw, while the others stay at the board.

CLARK
He's in the pelican's mouth all
that time?

SLIM
Well, I figure it's something
they won't see in a Western.

Slim, still brooding, goes over to Pete, as Ned and Jerry, in b.g., stay at the board to admire Slim's weird brilliance.

JERRY
Okay, how does he think of
something like that?

NED
(mock-dismissive)
Aah, they just pop into his head.
Joan of Arc -- same thing.

Slim finds Pete working on his first in-between of Porky.

SLIM
What've we got you... oh, yeah.
Good. Let me see your first
twenty, okay?

PETE
Sure.

Pete goes back to work. CAMERA goes close on his drawing, and

DISSOLVES TO:

ANOTHER DRAWING

of Porky. It's 20 in-betweens later -- Porky has flung his hands out and twisted his head around.

WIDER ANGLE finds Pete blinking off eyestrain and stacking his work. He starts taking it over to Slim, but Jerry stops him:

JERRY
(softly)
I don't think you want to
interrupt him right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim is on a tear: doing gag drawings at top speed, divinely inspired or demoniacally possessed, mumbling to himself -- till he abruptly stops, scans the gags, sweeps them into the wastebasket, and sits still, momentarily deflated.

NED

Not funny?

SLIM

(with distaste)

Kind of funny. .

He sees Pete standing there patiently, drawings in hand.

SLIM (CONT.)

Oh. Let's see...

He takes the drawings and FLIPS them to simulate animation as he leads Pete back to Pete's table.

SLIM

Yeah, these are good. The only thing is, this guy's kind of a... cute little animal. You draw him like this, you could wind up working over at Disney's. You don't want that.

PETE

I don't? -- Um, I mean, the cartoons here are great, but isn't Walt Disney...

SLIM

Oh, sure, they're wonderful. Wonderful. See, but the problem is, they pay about three times what we do. You go over there, right away everybody from here is trying to borrow money from you. You don't want that, do you?

PETE

No --

The guys interject without looking up from their work:

NED

Tightwad.

JERRY

They make it big, they forget.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLARK
Age-old story.

SLIM
See, this guy Porky, he's always going out and trying something, like -- well, like a new job, say. He says to himself, "I can do this. How hard can it be? Jeez, I'm not stupid. I've studied up. And I'm not afraid of hard work..."

Pete, on his own first day, starts getting caught up in it...

SLIM (CONT.)
(speeds up)
"Won't be like last time -- I'm gonna tackle this thing, with a positive frame of mind, and --"

A sudden change in Slim's aspect -- disaster strikes.

SLIM (cont.)
BAM! Little pig gets his head knocked off!

Now he's Porky again -- in pain.

SLIM (CONT.)
"Jeez! What did I do? Why me?"
(to Porky)
Because, pal... that's your job.
(to Pete)
You'd be talking funny too, by now. And then, the way he's moving here... it's a little lifelike.

PETE
Well -- shouldn't it -- ?

SLIM
Nope. When this guy moves...

Slim SPRINGS his arm open, almost hitting Pete, and indicates his elbow.

SLIM (cont.)
...it's like there's a rubber band in here, and some dynamite goes off down in here, and there's some, ah...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CLARK
"X," the unknown.

SLIM
"X," the unknown. That's right.
We use a lot of that.

Slim comes close to Pete, gives him a "pep talk":

SLIM (CONT.)
So, now -- you can tackle this
thing. How hard can it be...
with a positive frame of mind...

With surprising, cartoonish speed, he pops around to Pete's
other side, smiles --

SLIM (CONT.)
BAM! Just kidding! Ha ha!

As Slim gives Pete a crypto-reassuring pat on the shoulder and
goes back to work on his own drawings, Pete looks over at CHRIS
COLMAN, an assistant animator working nearby. Chris is hugely
tall and big-shouldered, but works with such silent
concentration that Pete hasn't registered him before.

What Pete notices now is Chris's speed -- drawings fly from his
hands to join a tall stack. Ned notices Pete staring:

NED
Don't worry, kid -- you'll never
be that fast.

Chris finally realizes he's the object of attention -- he
offers Pete his right hand, passing the pencil to his left so
he can continue to shade while he shakes.

CHRIS
Chris Colman.

PETE
Hi. Pete Nugent.

Chris still hasn't quite looked up -- he passes the pencil back
to his right hand and seamlessly continues drawing, as JACK
LANDY enters. Landy, about Pete's age, is good-looking, with
easy charm, and greets Pete with an open-faced smile.

LANDY
You must be the new guy -- Pete?
Jack Landy. I do in-betweens in
Eleven.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PETE
Hi. Yeah, I just started.
(lowers voice)
It's, uh --

LANDY
Oh, yeah, it's nutty at first.
Then it gets crazy. But look, if
you need any help with --

He's interrupted as MORT GUSTAFSON and LOU BRAND enter. Mort, the man drawing Porky in the photo we saw earlier, is a squat, sour-looking guy in his late 40s. His choleric, slightly lisping VOICE is reminiscent of Daffy Duck's, for reasons we'll soon see. Lou, Mort's aide, hangs a half-step behind him at all times.

LANDY (cont.)
Mister Gustafson! Mister Brand!
This is Pete Nugent, his first
day today...

Mort gives Pete a cursory handshake and a distracted welcome...

MORT
Yeah, good, hi...

...and Pete addresses the great man with excited respect:

PETE
Mister Gustafson, gee, it's great
to meet you -- say, could I ask
you something?

Mort looks impatient. Pete, indicating his work in progress, misses Jerry's urgent "ixnay" SIGNALS behind Mort's back.

PETE (CONT.)
On Porky here, when you draw the
eyes -- do they kind of pop open,
with the lids, or is it more --

He stops as he sees Mort glowering at him -- Lou too.

MORT
What is this, a wise guy?

PETE
Um -- no, I --

Slim hurries over and draws Mort aside, though Pete can hear:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

SLIM

Mort, hey, come on -- the kid didn't mean anything. He doesn't know anything. I mean, look at him...

Mort does look -- in a way that makes Pete feel branded as the Bad Seed of Room 15 -- but then turns to cast a suspicious eye at the drawings on the cork board.

MORT

What's this?

SLIM

It's called Porky and Daffy. It's got this crazy duck we've been fooling around with... he's a boxer, see, and Porky's his manager, he --

MORT

He's crazy from getting hit? Like dementia? Is that funny?

SLIM

Well, no, he's --

LOU

Crosses over the line there, Slim, terms of taste...

SLIM

Well, see, we --

Mort cuts him off, turns to address the room.

MORT

Boys, if I could have your attention a minute. We're gonna need another forty feet of film a week from this room --

SLIM

Forty? Mort, we're already --

LOU

Slim --

LANDY

We're doing it on our stuff too. It sounds like a lot, but it's not that bad. There's some shortcuts you can do on backgrounds, and --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MORT
There you go.

LOU
Effective immediately, boys.

He and Lou move on, with Landy tagging along.

MORT (CONT.)
Boxing, you make a Paul Muni
picture, his mother is crying
back in the thing, sure, but...

LANDY
I know what you're saying, sir...

When they're gone, Slim nods toward the door:

SLIM
Who's that specimen?

JERRY
Jack Landy. He in-betweens on
Beans the Cat.

With Mort and Lou gone, Pete exhales, a little shaky:

PETE
Boy, my first day, I almost got
canned.

SLIM
Aah, it's okay -- just never ask
Mort about drawing anything. He
doesn't know how. It's kind of
a sore point.

PETE
But you always see that picture
of him, where he's drawing Porky
Fig...

NED
Yeah, he's smiling in that
picture, too.

CLARK
I think they do it with mirrors.

Pete goes back to work. CAMERA GOES CLOSE on his drawing of
Porky...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

...and we watch a very basic animated CARTOON: Pete's pencil drawings of the afternoon, showing Porky in an urgent, arm-waving MOVEMENT. From the last drawing, WIDEN TO:

INT. ROOM 15 - LATER

Pete, bleary, rubs a cramp from his arm and looks around to find that he's alone, with TWILIGHT in the windows. From the corridor, the SOUND of homebound stragglers' footsteps.

Pete stops work, and goes to the cork board to look at Slim's drawings. Despite his exhaustion, the drawings' wildly imagined upheaval makes Pete smile -- a trace of the 6-year-old who loved Felix the Cat. He goes into

INT. CORRIDOR

where Jack Landy hails him on the way to Reception.

LANDY

Pete... boy, you've been through it, huh? Listen, don't let those guys in there get to you. They're a great bunch, but -- a few second childhoods going on, you know?

PETE

I guess so.

INT. RECEPTION AREA (CONTINUOUS)

Sheila is gathering her coat and purse, saying goodbye to a few late-leaving Ink & Paint WOMEN.

LANDY

What the hell, we'll be animators too, soon -- drive some other poor guy crazy. Let's keep our ears open, okay? Any openings... I tell you, you tell me.

PETE

Sure.

Landy shakes Pete's hand again, leaves.

SHEILA

Count your fingers, hon.

PETE

Excuse me -- ?

But Sheila is answering the last phone call of the day...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHEILA
Gustaf-- no, I'm sorry, he
doesn't work here any more.
Well, I can give you the number,
but his order has a vow of
silence... Mm-hmm...

...and Pete leaves too.

INT. PETE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A cheap furnished flat in Hollywood. NOISE from the street and other apartments. Pete, exhausted, sinks onto the COT and kicks his shoes off. Multiple PORKY PIGS hang in the air before him -- the overlapping outlines of the poses he drew today. He blinks, but still sees them, and so do we...

...till he closes his eyes, falling asleep in his clothes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TERMITE TERRACE - ROOM 15

Another day: as Pete works hard on in-betweens, Chris Colman looks up from his rapid production, spots Slim leaving the cork board, and makes his move, going over to Slim with a few cover-sheeted illustration boards.

CHRIS
Slim -- you have a minute?

SLIM
Sure, Chris. Whatcha got?

CHRIS
I think I'm really on to
something this time, Slim. It's
this little guy...

With a lumbering flourish, he pulls back a cover sheet to reveal careful ARTWORK of a hopelessly strange-looking, oil-dripping cartoon SHRIMP, with feelers that are meant to be winsome and a mouth awkwardly carved from his midsection.

CHRIS (CONT.)
... Scamp Shrimpy. See, he's
real friendly...

Chris unveils more drawings as he talks. Guys sneak looks, and are boggled by Scamp's weirdness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS (CONT.)
... but, see, he smells just like
garlic. And this little, kind
of, oil keeps dripping off him
when he walks... So, and, anybody
that walks behind him, they
always slip on it, like, "Wuh-
AAGGGHHH!" And he could have this
accent...

Slim answers carefully -- a triumph of tact over horror.

SLIM
Chris... there's something here,
definitely, but -- well, a
shrimp, there's no arms, so it's
hard for them to... do much...

CHRIS
Huh. Well, yeah --

SLIM
But, I tell you, they're getting
better.

CHRIS
You think?

SLIM
No question. You keep bringing
'em to me.

As eager as he was to sell his idea, Chris is cheerful at
Slim's rejection.

CHRIS
Okay. Thanks.

Slim smiles. Chris goes into the corridor O.S. with his
boards, as Slim speaks sotto voce to Pete...

SLIM (CONT.)
All his ideas are that good.

PETE
Wow.

...we HEAR the boards going into a trash barrel O.S. -- then
Chris returns, at peace, and goes back to work, FLIPPING a
stack of pencil drawings of Porky. CAMERA moves in on the
primitive animation... and we

DISSOLVE TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS

... of PEOPLE at work on the cartoon. These shots are MOS, with Carl Stalling-type MUSIC over.

INK AND PAINT WOMEN, in their assembly line-like room, chat as they trace the pencil drawings on CELS in ink.

A meek, quiet-looking MAN with a briefcase comes into the building, greets Sheila, and goes into a corridor...

A CAMERAMAN positions a cel over a background on an animation stand, closes the glass, shoots the one-frame picture, and starts putting the next cel in place.

In the corridor, the meek-looking man with the briefcase greets some passing ANIMATORS with an almost deferent nod...

SLIM AND ANIMATORS, in the projection "sweatbox," watch a repeating LOOP of a 5-second scene. They kibitz, point to a moment Slim thinks is off, and agree on a fix.

In a RECORDING STUDIO, the sound for the cartoon is being recorded, under Slim's supervision, by an ORCHESTRA, VOICE ACTORS, a SOUND EFFECTS MAN and an ENGINEER. A few animators, including Pete, are the audience.

The musicians continue playing the MUSIC we've been hearing: a rowdy pastiche, punctuated by NOISES from the SFX man.

Our MOS section is interrupted as the orchestra pauses and Slim cues the meek-looking man with the briefcase, who turns out to be PHIL WHITE, star voice actor. He opens his mouth, and out jumps the loud, startlingly un-meek VOICE of Daffy Duck --

PHIL

I'm so crazy, I don't know this
is impossible!

-- an exaggeration of Mort's juicy lisp. Slim signals okay and cues the orchestra to go on, but the CONDUCTOR waves "Cut."

CONDUCTOR

That's the voice for the duck?
(Slim nods)
He's doing Mort.

Phil answers in his own soft voice, with quiet pride:

PHIL

Yes. I followed him last week --
discreetly.

SFX MAN

Slim, he's gonna fire all of us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
Aw, don't worry. Mort's not gonna get it.

ENGINEER
Sure he's gonna get it, it's --

SLIM
No he's not. You know why?
'Cause it's funny. And...

Slim again cues the dubious guys, as we cut away and resume our MOS SERIES OF SHOTS with MUSIC over:

The SFX guy sits at a MOVIOLE, slowly moving the track along and marking an exposure sheet -- "I... 'm... s... o... cr... a... z... y..." at different frame numbers.

Back in ROOM 15, with EVENING outside. Chris Colman hands over drawings to RUDY, a "runner," who takes off with them.

In a SOUND MIXING STUDIO, Slim, the SFX guy, and two ENGINEERS wear headphones. As the engineers work the board, a splicey WORK PRINT of the cartoon screens on the wall.

CAMERA moves in on the unfinished cartoon, and we

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PROJECTION ROOM

The same cartoon, in finished form: DAFFY DUCK, as a boxer, is losing a match with a huge "FIGHTING" COCK.

WIDER ANGLE reveals Termite Terrace's little projection room. Mort and Lou occupy elevated seats on the back wall, while animators fill the remaining seats. On screen, Porky, as Daffy's manager, calls from ringside:

PORKY
G-get on your b-b-tricycle,
Daffy!

Daffy gets on an imaginary "bicycle" and scoots around the ring, evading the cock. As Daffy turns to the cartoon "CAMERA" to speak, SPOT people in the screening room tensing, sneaking sideways looks at Mort.

DAFFY
I'm so crazy I don't know this is impossible!

Mort taps Slim from behind, and "whispers" loud enough for the room to hear:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORT
Jeez, that's a funny voice!
Where'd you get that?

SLIM
Oh, we were just --

MORT
It's funny... but there's a
humanity there. Like he cares.

Rare praise -- he even pats Slim's shoulder before he leans back and resumes watching. Guys near Slim, including the music director, look over at him -- he enjoys a what-did-I-tell-you expression, then nudges Pete and whispers:

SLIM
Hey, here you come...

As Pete watches intently, Porky flails his arms over Daffy, who's out cold...

PORKY (CONT.)
D-d-Daffy! Open your peepers!

It's the move Pete spent all that time in-betweening: a few seconds and it's gone.

SLIM
...there you go.

PETE
That's it?

SLIM
Yep. Was it good for you?

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 15 - DAY

Another day -- Slim's gang is at work as usual when, suddenly:

NED
Condition red!

A small red WARNING LIGHT beside Ned's desk is blinking.

SLIM
Okay! Let's go!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In a second, all the guys but Pete are in positions of non-productivity: shining shoes, making rubber-band balls, tuning in race results on the RADIO, faking PHONE CALLS to hot dates, etc. Slim grabs a morning paper, opens the sports, and stages an argument with the bewildered Pete.

SLIM (CONT.)
...Naah, see, their problem's
pitching, these farmers couldn't
get their mom out...

... as Lou Brand, Mort Gustafson's second-in-command, stomps into the room and glowers at its occupants in a slow burn. Slim, ignoring him, nudges Pete -- a cue.

PETE
No, uh, look, good pitching'll
beat good hitting, but --

LOU
WHAT IN THE HELL?

The guys look up, mock-chastened.

SLIM
Lou! Hi! We're kind of
brainstorming on some --

LOU
Brainstorming my ass.

SLIM
Well, we --

LOU
Get to work! The hell do we pay
you people for?

He stomps out, and the guys break their poses.

SLIM
Good one, men.

He hands the sports section over to the still-mystified Pete --

SLIM (CONT.)
Save our place.

--as receptionist Sheila comes in, carrying a sheaf of FLYERS.

SHEILA
Read these and burn 'em, boys.
Union meeting on Wednesday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

We glimpse the flyer's ARTWORK: Porky Pig holding a picket sign that reads ORGANIZE. Guys take the flyers from her, but stick them in drawers or pockets without reading them.

SHEILA

Oh, come on, guys -- look, if we go with the union, we could get overtime --

ANIMATOR 1

We go with the union, we'll get fired.

SHEILA

Oh, that's right -- Mort could do all the drawing himself. I hadn't thought of that.

JERRY

Yeah, but Sheila, you read the paper, there's all kinds of shady types mixed up in that -- gangsters, communists...

SHEILA

I'll tell you who's mixed up in it -- the girls in Ink and Paint. They're not afraid to show up at a meeting -- 'course, they're all big and strong, and they're a little sick of making eight bucks a week.

That makes the guys uncomfortable...

SHEILA (CONT.)

Think about it.

...and she exits, leaving them that way.

PETE

Eight bucks?

JERRY

Things are tough all over. You can quote me.

Slim looks the flyer over...

SLIM

Pretty good of the pig...

...before sticking it in a drawer, as Ned announces:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NED

Lunch!

He reaches over his desk, where a picture of CHRIST, with an inscription reading "To my pal Ned, from Jesus," hangs on the wall. He turns it around to reveal a hand-lettered MENU, as guys, including Pete and Jerry, come over.

JERRY

The special, Ned.

PETE

Me too.

NED

Good choice.

Ned collects their money, fills the order from the ZINC-LINED DRAWERS of his desk -- STEAMING hot dogs in one drawer, SMOKING dry ice and Cokes in another -- and indicates a few paint jars on the desk.

NED

Try the new mustard. Not that one, that's paint.

As more customers line up, a BASKET on a string descends outside Ned's window and hovers. Ned takes an order slip from the basket, fills the order -- the special, aspirin, a condom -- and tugs the string, as lunchtime CHATTER continues...

ANIMATOR 2

Boy, I went and saw the sets of that Switzerland picture, with the hills? You'd swear you were in Burbank.

CLARK

They let an animator in there?

ANIMATOR 2

I pretended I was an extra.

...and Pete and Jerry go to Jerry's drawing table, where Jerry pushes a DRAWING aside to make room for lunch. Pete spots the drawing, and does a take:

PETE

Holy cow, what's that?

We see only a teasing portion of the drawing: bare cartoon LIMBS -- some of them Daffy Duck's -- in energetic motion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JERRY

Well -- you see, son, when a man
and a lady like each other very
much, they go somewhere --

PETE

That's a duck and a lady.

JERRY

But the principle's the same.

ANIMATOR 1

Jerry, quit corrupting the kid.

PETE

That isn't for a cartoon, is it?

JERRY

No, no. That's the hell of this
business, son. That my best work
will never be seen by the average
public.

As Jerry holds the drawing up admiringly, an INK & PAINT GAL
finishes buying lunch at Ned's desk and heads toward Jerry's --
Pete realizes she's about to see the drawing. In a gentlemanly
panic, he hurries to shield it from her sight, but doesn't make
it. He's taken aback when she LAUGHS at the drawing, and at
Pete's concern for her.

INK & PAINT GAL

(meaning Pete)

Cute.

She goes off -- Jerry watches her walk away as he speaks.

JERRY

One day it'll hit you, kid -- you
can only draw 'em going off
cliffs so many times.

NED

What's wrong with going off
cliffs? The problem is, they
land, we don't show any detail.
Bunch of smoke. There was really
a six-foot-tall cat, you know
what it'd look like after
something like that? Bones
coming through the skin...

CLARK

Very nice, for kids --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

NED
Yeah, well, there's a hunger for
the truth in this country.

As Pete heads back to work, Animator 2 puts four hot dogs down
in front of Chris, who's drawing away as usual.

ANIMATOR 2
(indicates Ned)
The gentleman in the corner.
With his compliments.

Chris nods his thanks at Ned as he eats with one hand,
continuing to draw with the other, and we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - LATER

Lou Brand enters the building.

INT. RECEPTION AREA

SHEILA
Hi, Lou.

Lou grunts an answer and heads for Room 15, as Sheila pushes a
BUTTON on the underside of her desk...

INT. ROOM 15

...and Ned spots the RED LIGHT blinking beside his desk.

NED
Condition red!

The guys scramble into an exact replica of this morning's
tableau vivant: shoe-shining, radio listening, and Slim and
Pete sharing the sports page, as Lou walks in:

PETE
... see, but good pitching
divided by good hitting --

LOU
GODDAMMIT!

The guys look innocently at him.

LOU (CONT.)
Doesn't anybody ever work around --

SLIM
But, Lou --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Looking wounded, Slim points to the cork board: rows of fresh GAG DRAWINGS have been added since this morning.

Now Lou is really steamed, but with nothing to say. As he leaves, the guys break their poses, go to the window. In a moment, Lou appears outside, stomping away from the building. He's talking to himself, flummoxed.

CLARK

Oh sure, it's fun now. But you do this a few more times, his mind snaps. He'll be a drooling idiot.

NED

So?

CLARK

So they make him head of production. Then we'll be sorry.

From Slim, Pete and the others looking out the window,

DISSOLVE TO:

A MATCHING IMAGE

of the group -- a cartoon DRAWING in progress, on lined paper. Pete's HAND is working on the caricatures -- nearby are some handwritten WORDS, and we HEAR in V.O.:

PETE (V.O.)

The big guy is Slim Edwards. He's our director, and everybody wants to be like him when they grow up. For many of the guys, this seems to be quite a ways off...

A wider ANGLE reveals

INT. PETE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

He's flopped on the cot, working on the letter. The place is a little bit humanized -- canned food and a hot plate; pinned-up drawings from work.

PETE (V.O.)

My big debut is on its way to the theaters -- it's called Porky and Daffy.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (Cont'd)
If you count four minutes and
twelve seconds after it starts
and then watch closely for six
seconds, I'm sure my style will
jump out at you.

CLOSE on the drawing as he finishes shading it.

PETE (V.O.) (CONT.)
I tried to get an appointment at
the Disney studios, but they're
not taking applications now.
Mom, I'm being nice to everyone,
like you said to, though I'm not
sure the people out here can
tell.

Back to the wider angle -- Pete sticks some cash into the
envelope with the letter, heads for the door.

PETE (V.O.) (CONT.)
Well, I enclose some of my vast
Hollywood earnings, and love to
all... Pete.

INT. ROOM 15 - DAY

A STORY SESSION for a new cartoon is in progress. Guys from
Slim's room and elsewhere in the Terrace are present, including
Jack Landy.

At the corkboard, where Slim presides, we see a Hollywood theme
in the GAG DRAWINGS -- limos, searchlights, caricatured movie
stars. The session is a free-for-all of guys sketching,
telling, and kibitzing ideas.

JERRY
... so the searchlights are
shining all over the place, and
you follow the beams up to the
Man in the Moon, with the
nightcap on, and he says --
(shields his eyes)
"Hey, gimme a break, willya?"

NED
Or he whistles, and the
constellation, the guy with the
arrow thing, shoots out the
searchlight.
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NED (Cont'd)
Pow, it blows up -- get a decent explosion for once, people flying around, put a hole in the street like the Grand Canyon -- terrific.

LANDY
Or, when the light explodes, the guys next to it turn black, they start singing "Camptown Races" --

Slim doesn't like Landy's idea -- he slides past it with a noncommittal look, turns to Jerry:

SLIM
Uh, what was your Laurel and Hardy... ?

As Jerry answers, illustrating with gag sketches he holds up, Clark passes a sketch up to Slim -- a constellation HUNTER drawing his bow as a cranky MAN IN THE MOON points down at the offending searchlight.

JERRY
You see Oliver Hardy, from the back here, dancing with this girl... he turns around, it's two girls.

SLIM
Sure, nothing like a fat man joke...

He takes Jerry's drawings and pins them up, then turns to Pete, who's sitting near the back, putting nervous finishing touches on some sketches of his own.

SLIM
New guy, what've you got?

PETE
Um, I had an idea for something to do with Constance Morrow...

JERRY
Yeah, I've had a few of those too.

Slim's look says, "And...?" Pete takes a deep breath and plunges in, holding up his gag drawings, narrating them:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETE

This limousine pulls up in front of the nightclub. It's the longest car in the world. It keeps going and going, there's thirty doors --

SLIM

Yeah, and you do some stuff with the windows -- one window, you have people eating, like in a dining car, another one there's a lady yelling down like in a tenement --

JERRY

"HOIBIE! GET IN HERE, HOIBIE!"

PETE

I was just getting to that.

SLIM

No, go ahead --

PETE

So you finally get to the back of the car, and it's pulled up outside this bar -- a real dive, you know, with the flashing neon signs and everything -- and the back door opens, and Constance Morrow gets out...

Pete's drawing shows CONSTANCE MORROW, the reigning screen queen, stepping out of the limo's back door at a dive called The Hotsy Totsy Club. Her face is tilted upward in a parody of movie-star self-importance.

PETE (CONT.)

... and she's so busy being a star, she doesn't see where she is. She thinks the lights are flashbulbs --

Clark imitates Constance's trademark gush:

CLARK

"You dear people... oh, hello..."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PETE

She starts going inside, but then she hears this whistle, and there's Harpo Marx on a scooter, like a little kid. She gets on it with him --

SLIM

You know, Constance Morrow's working over here...

He gestures "gimme" at Pete, who passes his drawings up.

JERRY

That's right, they're making... what's it called, Furball -- ?

NED

It's about cats?

CLARK

Fireball in Furs.

SLIM

(to Pete)

Why don't you go over and hang around, sketch her a little? You could animate some stuff yourself.

He pins Pete's drawings up as he speaks. Nobody else seems to regard this as a big deal, but Pete is wowed.

PETE

Um -- yeah. Yeah, I --

SLIM

Fine. I'm feeling faint, must be lunch time. Back here at one.

The meeting breaks up and Pete heads out, into

INT. CORRIDOR

Still a little dazed, he starts around a corner...

` RUDY (O.S.)

Beep beep!

...and almost collides with Rudy, the "runner" who carries stuff from room to room. Rudy's armload of stuff is piled so high that he can't see over it -- thus the "Beep beep!" as he rounds corners.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANDY (O.S.)
Those runners -- they're a
menace.

Jack Landy joins Pete -- FOLLOW them toward Reception.

LANDY (CONT.)
By the way, congratulations.

PETE
Thanks. I didn't expect -- I
mean, to animate it --

LANDY
Aah, you'll do great. Probably
won't have any trouble with the
studio, really...

PETE
What do you mean?

LANDY
Well, Constance Morrow, big
star... could get 'em nervous.
This guy at Metro, put some gags
about Ronald Colman in a cartoon?
Hell to pay.

PETE
Well, but they were talking about
putting Cary Grant, and --

LANDY
Absolutely. Look, sometimes
you've gotta risk it all. That's
what life is, right?
(shakes Pete's hand)
Knock 'em dead, pal.

Pete finds himself looking his fingers over as Landy goes off.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - MORNING

Pete, with sketch pad in hand, follows a stream of PEOPLE to a
sound stage entrance, but a security GUARD stops him there.

GUARD
Whoa, whoa, whoa. You got
clearance on this set?

PETE
Oh -- I work here on the lot --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUARD

Me too. Small world. You on this show?

PETE

No, but I have to --

GUARD

You want to look at Constance Morrow, right? Best way is go down to your local neighborhood theater, buy a ticket, you can sit through two shows.

PETE

No, I have to see her, to --

GUARD

Get a grip, son. She's only flesh and blood. Go back to work.

There are a few people backed up behind Pete -- he steps away and lets them by. Retreating, he sees some GUYS -- half of them in tuxedos, half in ship steward's uniforms -- going in another entrance, past a different GUARD.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREET - AFTERNOON

Pete goes into a COSTUME RENTAL STORE on a Hollywood corner.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - MORNING

The same stage as yesterday -- but Pete, in a ship steward's COSTUME, slips inside along with the arriving extras.

INT. SOUND STAGE

On the SET -- an ocean liner STATEROOM -- a between-takes bustle of activity is going on, centering on the hair, makeup, and costume of the knockout CONSTANCE MORROW.

As the other extras grab donuts from a coffee cart, Pete slips into a shadowy recess of the stage wall, takes his sketchbook out, and starts drawing discreetly.

AN ASSISTANT

Quiet, please, here we go.

CONSTANCE

Where, uh --

SCRIPT GIRL

"The thing about Gerald."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONSTANCE
Right-o.

SOUND MAN
Sound rolling.

CAMERAMAN
Camera rolling.

DIRECTOR
And... action.

It's a romantic comedy, and Constance's character is distraught, talking rapid-fire to her male CO-STAR.

CONSTANCE
And the thing about Gerald -- well, he's... sensible. He plans things out. He knows just what he's going to be doing five years from now.

CO-STAR
I admire that in a fellow.

CONSTANCE
Oh, you probably don't know what you're going to be doing five minutes from now -- and don't get any ideas about it, either.

CO-STAR
Say, what's the matter? You look green.

He takes her elbows in his hands...

CONSTANCE
Well -- either I'm seasick or I'm falling in love with you, and believe me, I'd much rather be seasick, but we haven't left port yet and --

He shuts her up with a big KISS, which lingers until --

DIRECTOR
Cut! Give us a minute here.

He heads into the "stateroom" to talk to the actors.

CONSTANCE
What was wrong with that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DIRECTOR

Did I say something was wrong?

Pete is looking at the set, dazzled -- a mood broken as he overhears two female CREW MEMBERS talking nearby.

DOT CHENAULT, in her early 20s, is a costumer, pretty under a frowsy overlay of smock, tape measures, and glasses perched on pinned-up hair. JEANNE, a makeup artist, is a mask of show biz fatalism around a dangling cigarette.

JEANNE

Great kiss. You'd think he liked girls.

DOT

(mock-scandalized)
Jeanne!

JEANNE

Whereas she's hell on wheels today.

DOT

I know. She thinks her rear end sticks out in this dress.

JEANNE

Of course it sticks out. That's her magic.

DOT

Fine, you tell her.

Jeanne sees the co-star rub his eyes -- she despairs.

JEANNE

Oh, goody, now he's forty-five again.

As Jeanne heads for the actor, readying a fresh coat of powder, Dot backs up to scrutinize the set -- and bumps into Pete, who's blended into the woodwork a little too well.

DOT

Oh! Sorry, I --
(sees his costume)
Hey, that's not real --

Pete tries to motion her quiet.

DOT (CONT.)

In fact, that's junk. What are --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PETE
Please -- I'm from --

Dot's eye falls on the SKETCH on Pete's pad: it's Constance, in Looney Tune caricature. The beauty is there, but the hauteur and derriere are neatly exaggerated and made comic. Dot's eyes widen -- who the hell is this guy? -- when:

CONSTANCE (O.S.)
Dot!

Dot turns, sees Constance fretting over her rear in a mirror on the set. Dot whispers to Pete, indicates the drawing.

DOT
For God's sake, hide that.

As she hurries off, Pete, relieved, draws back into his niche.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Magic hour, and the Constance Morrow picture has wrapped for the day. Pete, leaving along with the crew, crosses paths with Dot, who's weighed down by an armload of costumes.

PETE
Hi. Thanks for not --

DOT
What's the idea with that outfit?
I'd hate anyone to think I sewed it.

PETE
They wouldn't let me on -- here,
let me give you a hand...

She hands the costumes off -- and, before Pete can stop her, takes his sketch pad.

PETE
Oh, uh, I can take --

But she's already got it open, and starts flipping through the pages as Pete follows her down the "street" between stages.

DOT
Boy, these are rough. What are you, a blackmailer?

PETE
I'm an animator, over here on the lot. You know, the cartoons?
Here, I can --

(CONTINUED)



/

.

.



CONTINUED:

Pete holds the costumes out flat, but Dot continues paging through his sketchbook.

DOT
Oh, Porky Pig and all that. Are
you putting Constance in one?

PETE
Well, we're -- here, I'll --

Too late: Dot's come to a DRAWING of her caricatured self -- mouth full of pins, stray hairs in her face, bending to struggle with the lower half of Constance's costume.

DOT
Hmm.

She stops walking a moment, bringing the costume-laden Pete up short, and swaps the sketchpad for the costumes.

PETE
Hey, I'm sorry about that, I was
just kind of fooling --

DOT
Serves me right. You got a name?

PETE
Pete Nugent. Look, I --

DOT
Dot Chenault. When'd you get out
here?

PETE
Does it really show?

DOT
Just takes one to know one.
Landover, Missouri.

PETE
Lyman, Kansas.

They stop outside a BUILDING marked WARDROBE.

DOT
I don't really look like that, do
I?

But Pete takes the question seriously, and looks at her a little harder than she had in mind -- seeing through to the prettiness, and replying sincerely:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETE

No.

An awkward BEAT, then:

DOT

Well, I better...

PETE

Yeah, I've got to get...

But he watches her disappear into Wardrobe before he goes anywhere.

CUT TO:

CONSTANCE MORROW

-- as portrayed in pencil cartoon DRAWINGS, being FLIPPED to simulate animation.

SLIM (O.S.)

Yep...

WIDER ANGLE reveals

INT. ROOM 15 - LATE AFTERNOON

where most of the guys are calling it a day. Pete finishes flipping the drawings for Slim, moves on to some extremes.

PETE

Then here's W.C. Fields... and she takes the bottle....

SLIM

Mm. You can draw your ass, huh?

NED

Sure, you give him a big star to work with.

Jerry comes over, looks over Pete's shoulder.

JERRY

Draw her ass, anyway.

SLIM

(points at drawing)
Do this thing fast, though --
twenty frames.

PETE

Twenty? That's less than a second.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

You bet. People like that. What the hell was that, uh oh, here comes another one. No time to think. Been thinking all week, what good did that do 'em...

He picks up his briefcase, heads for the door.

SLIM (CONT.)

You get the lights?

Pete nods "sure," and he's alone in the room again. Flipping through his original Constance sketches, he runs across the unflattering one of Dot Chenault. He goes out...

INT. TERMITE TERRACE RECEPTION

...and sees Ned being picked up by the surprisingly glamorous MRS. NED, and Sheila leaving with one of the costume COWBOYS from the nearby set. Pete stands in the doorway a beat -- no place to go but home. He pulls his figurative socks up...

EXT. A SOUNDSTAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Dot, ending her work day, checks a rack of costumes, pushing hangers past her and logging them on a list -- till she pushes one aside and finds Pete's face in the resulting daylight.

PETE

Hi.

Dot starts, then recovers.

DOT

You're a lot of fun around the house, aren't you?

She pushes the last few costumes past, shutting Pete's face out, but he meets her at the end of the rack.

PETE

You're not still mad about that sketch, are you? That's just how we do it here. The ducks don't look like real ducks, the --

DOT

Mm hmm. How's it coming?

PETE

Not bad. I had to work on Constance Morrow's walk for a while.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOT
So did she.

PETE
We have this one gag where...
well, you're working now, I don't
want to -- I tell you what, I'll
come by here one day at knock-off
time, we can get a sandwich or
something, I'll tell you about it --
say Tuesday?

DOT
Pretty slick for Kansas.

He's already heading off.

PETE
Yeah, that's why I had to leave.

He's looking at her as he walks -- almost collides with a
couple of GRIPS moving a scene flat.

DOT
Uh huh.

CUT TO:

ROOM 15 - DAY

Another day's work BUZZ is interrupted as Mort and Lou come in
to address the unit.

MORT
Boys, I have good news. The
Warners people tell me our last
group of pictures was very
popular with the theaters. Over
the coming months we're gonna be
increasing our output by thirty
percent.

SLIM
Are we hiring thirty percent more
people?

MORT
(chuckles)
Well, no, Slim. But --

NED
We get overtime?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LOU

There won't be an increase in payments as such, but we will have the heat stay on at night and full coffee available. We feel it's the least we can do.

CLARK

Right you are.

Mort and Lou head for the exit, but Slim sticks with them.

SLIM

Mort, it's too much -- I've got guys in there, already haven't seen their wives for a week. I mean, in my case, that's probably for the best... but seriously --

MORT

Seriously we need more film. Lou tells me, half the time he comes in here, they're listening to the ball game or something.

SLIM

Oh, for -- that just proves it, you guys wouldn't know a joke --

MORT

(points to room)
Go draw me some and we'll see.

Mort and Lou leave -- Slim looking angrily after them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLIFTON'S CAFETERIA - DUSK

A few days later. Pete and Dot come out of Clifton's Cafeteria in downtown L.A. Out from under her work gear, Dot is pretty in a solid Midwestern way that could make Pete homesick. FOLLOW them down the street, as passing COUPLES head for movie theaters or swing ballrooms.

PETE

How long have you been out here?

DOT

Two years... that means I'm a native, roughly.

PETE

They proud of you back home?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOT
Are you kidding, they're scandalized. Hollywood? My folks think I spend my evenings smoking opium with chorus boys.

PETE
How do you spend them?

DOT
Sewing, thank you. They're working us later and later.

PETE
Yeah, us too. It's crazy. I'm gonna stick with it, though. Maybe get a job at Disney's one day. Come up with my own characters, or...

DOT
Make a million bucks?

PETE
That wouldn't be bad. But... when I was little, there was no movie theater in town yet. Guy used to come through with a truck, set up a projector in somebody's barn...

DOT
Or the Grange hall.

They pass a RADIO STORE, and navigate around a knot of PEOPLE listening to "Amos 'n' Andy" on a P.A. speaker.

PETE
These people'd sit in there, farmers -- the most worn-out people in the world... but you show the cartoon, you still get a laugh out of 'em. People like that, they can use it..
(shrugs)
Well -- it's not a big deal, except -- I could do it. I could do some stuff that --

He catches her look.

PETE (CONT.)
What, what are you thinking?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DOT
No, nothing...

They walk on a moment in silence for a beat, then:

DOT (CONT.)
Here we are.

They stop in front of a drab RESIDENCE HOTEL.

PETE
Oh. Not bad.

DOT
Yes it is, it's a dump. That's
what happens when you send money
home.
(shakes head)
Back there, they can all do
something useful, and they're all
out of work, and we're out here
making movies about rich people
trying to kiss each other.

PETE
Well, I guess rich people are
like anybody else...

It's a chance for a kiss, but Dot ducks it -- squeezes Pete's
hand instead.

DOT
I had a good time.

PETE
Yeah, me too...

DOT
Call me or something.

PETE
Sure.

She goes inside. Pete watches her, trying to figure out if
he's getting anywhere with her... then turns to go.

CUT TO:

CARTOON IMAGE - EXT. HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Our FRAME is filled by the finished cartoon "Hollywood Steps
Out." In a PAN across the Hollywood landscape, dozens of
SEARCHLIGHTS sweep the night sky, moving in time to the CONGA
MUSIC on the soundtrack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The cartoon "CAMERA" moves in on CIRO'S NIGHTCLUB, where a SIGN reads "DELUXE DINNER - \$50 & UP - EASY TERMS - 6 MONTHS TO PAY - SMALL DOWN PAYMENT."

CARTOON IMAGE - INSIDE CIRO'S

This Looney Tune is a series of gags with caricatured MOVIE STARS in the posh nightclub. At one table, GRETA GARBO sells cigarettes to CARY GRANT... then hoists her giant SHOE onto the table and strikes a match on the sole to light one for him.

At another table, DOROTHY LAMOUR talks shy JIMMY STEWART into trying a mambo... but he watches her dance for a beat, goggles at the racy moves, sticks a SIGN reading "MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON" on the table, grabs his valise and flees.

A new ANGLE finds CONSTANCE MORROW, in Pete's oblivious, self-important caricature, sweeping into the nightclub. She breezes past W.C. FIELDS, who's drinking a beer at the bar, plucks the bottle from him, holds it adoringly, and makes an acceptance speech as she moves on:

CARTOON CONSTANCE (CONT.)

Oh thank you, thank you -- I
don't deserve this... but I
accept it on behalf of all the
little people... the
leprechauns, the elves, and those
wonderful, wonderful gnomes...

INT. TERMITE TERRACE SCREENING ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

The Termite Terrace staff, plus Mort and Lou, are watching the cartoon: Sheila laughing, Slim studying the screen, Pete nervously trying not to look at the stolid Mort.

On screen, W.C. Fields tries to retrieve his bottle, but Constance suddenly turns and bends down to shake hands with someone out of FRAME --

CARTOON CONSTANCE (CONT.)

Why, it's Mickey Mouse --

She swivels, bending still lower --

CARTOON CONSTANCE (CONT.)

-- and Mickey Rooney --

-- and her prominent BOTTOM knocks Fields over -- he BOUNCES BACK to his feet like a punch-the-clown toy.

CARTOON FIELDS

Jehosophat! A menace to
navigation!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the screening room, Mort nods vaguely and almost smiles -- the most grudging possible show of approval. Slim sees this, gives Pete a thumbs-up. Jack Landy sees it too -- scowls to himself, but covers with a smile when Pete glances his way.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TERMITE TERRACE - ROOM 15 - AFTERNOON

A spring day, with RAIN falling outside. We find our guys scrambling to put paint jars and other receptacles under the LEAKS, as new ones sprout in the water-damaged ceiling.

CLARK

Nice weather for ducks...

NED

Not for drawing 'em -- dammit!

A blob of rain RUINS one of his sketches, and he scoots a coffee cup under the leak, barely saving some other drawings.

NED (CONT.)

Fine modern goddamn facility we have here...

He's about to say more, but a VOICE from the doorway stops everything:

CONSTANCE (O.S.)

Excuse me.

All look up to SEE a vision: Constance Morrow.

SLIM

Miss Morrow.

As she comes into the room, the doorway behind her fills with GUYS from other units, watching.

CONSTANCE

I'm looking for that Mister Gustafson -- you know, the fellow who draws the little cartoons?

Smiles and suppressed laughs among the troops.

SLIM

Uh -- actually, Mister Gustafson's very busy, he kind of farms some work out here...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONSTANCE

Oh -- well, I thought that one of
me was just delightful, and --

SLIM

(relaxes)

Oh, well, that wasn't Mister
Gustafson. Here's the guy you
want -- Pete Nugent.

Pete makes a hopeless attempt to sound casual.

PETE

Hi.

CONSTANCE

Hello, Pete. May I call you
Pete? Well, that was wonderful.
I was so flattered. I thought
you'd never get around to me.

PETE

Well, of course we --

CONSTANCE

Oh, and this is where you draw,
look -- please come have a drink
with me, I want to know what it's
like to be so clever. No,
really, it'll be fun. Please?

Pete is momentarily paralyzed. Guys behind Constance's back
urge him with gestures: go, dummy,

PETE

Sounds great.

As they head for the door, all eyes follow them...

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - LATE AFTERNOON

...and watch from the windows as they get into Constance's
waiting white LIMOUSINE.

INT. LIMO/EXT. STREETS - DUSK

Pete and Constance are in the back of the limo, heading for mid-
Wilshire. Evading Pete's protesting hand, Constance tops off
his glass with Champagne, killing the bottle.

PETE

Um -- I'm awfully glad you liked
the cartoon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONSTANCE
Oh, I loved it.

PETE
I was a little afraid you would
think we were making fun of you.

Constance's gaiety snags on this thought.

CONSTANCE
Really? How?

PETE
Well, uh -- the way you were
drawn, and --

CONSTANCE
But that's all in fun, isn't it?
(earnestly)
I think if you're -- chosen, in
a way, to be up there on the
screen, and be an example to
other women -- well, you have to
have a sense of humor about
yourself. Don't you think?

The limo pulls up at the real CIRO'S NIGHTCLUB.

INT. CIRO'S - EVENING (LATER)

Pete and Constance have been drinking steadily -- it slows him down, but speeds her up. As nearby PEOPLE look over, Constance holds up an empty daiquiri pitcher, beckons a WAITER:

CONSTANCE
Yoo hoo, over here...
(to Pete)
Well, we heard about your
cartoon, and a whole gang of us
went down to a real movie house
to see it. Nobody's been to one
in years, because everyone's got
these screening rooms now -- you
know, Rita got these antique
tapestries for the curtain in
hers, and it was almost a
scandal, it turns out they were
sacred to one of these small
religions.

PETE
I'm sure she didn't --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONSTANCE
Well, we were there in disguise,
of course, and it turns out they
give away dishes now. I thought
they were to eat the popcorn off
of, you know, to bring some
manners to it, but no, you keep
them -- did you know?

PETE
My mother has a set.

CONSTANCE
There, you see? What's wrong?

PETE
Just -- all these people looking
at us.

CONSTANCE
Oh, no, that's your imagination.
They're looking at me.

INT. LIMO/EXT. CONSTANCE'S PLACE - NIGHT

The limo pulls up outside a Spanish-style HOUSE, high in the
Hollywood hills. The DRIVER opens the door, and Pete wobbles
up the walk behind Constance.

PETE
Your house is beautiful. It's
just like I thought a --

CONSTANCE
Oh, this isn't my home...

INT. CONSTANCE'S PLACE (ENTRYWAY)

They enter the splendid house. Constance picks up a crystal
decanter full of booze from a table as she heads deeper inside.

CONSTANCE
...it's just a little pomme de
terre I keep here in town. Bring
those glasses, would you? \

Pete obeys, with trepidation, following Constance O.S. to...

INT. BEDROOM

Constance pours drinks, takes one, and playfully leads Pete
toward the big, silk-clothed BED.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONSTANCE
You know, you did such a good
job, drawing me... but there are
some things you have to see first-
hand to get them just right.

PETE
Uh, Miss Morrow -- Constance --
I shouldn't be doing this --

CONSTANCE
Oh, I know. Aren't the things
you shouldn't do just the best?

And as she tumbles him onto the bed, we

DISSOLVE TO:

A DRAWING OF PETE

-- in conference with two young ANIMATORS. It's one of Pete's caricatures for a letter home. In his self-kidding drawing, he wears a beret and a monocle, and the animators are awe-struck as he shows them two GAG DRAWINGS that GLOW with brilliance.

PETE (V.O.)
Dear folks -- Guess what, I'm
directing a cartoon of my own.
I always thought you had to be
about forty-eight and smoke a
pipe before you could do it, but
here I am...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOM 15

A matching shot, MOS, of Pete talking a few guys through his gag drawings. In real life, of course, Pete is dressed normally, and the conversation is matter-of-fact.

PETE (V.O.)
I have guys working under me and
the whole bit...

INT. CORRIDOR/SCREENING ROOM

Another MOS shot -- Pete and others filing into the Termite Terrace screening room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (V.O.)
And by the way -- it's in
Technicolor. Disney's been doing
it, and one thing I can tell you
about this business: you've got
to keep up...

INT. SCREENING ROOM

Pete and the others are watching his cartoon, Ghost Wanted, in which a LITTLE GHOST of wide-eyed, Disneyesque cuteness has answered a "Haunt Ad" and applied for a job at a HAUNTED HOUSE maintained by a BIG GHOST.

The cartoon is a showcase of fancy painting -- every shadow in the haunted house is beautifully rendered. The only problem is, the picture isn't funny -- a problem underscored by the polite smiles of the Terrace people in the screening room.

On screen, the big ghost, invisible at the moment, tells the little one:

BIG GHOST
Okay, bub -- scare me. Let's see
ya scare me!

The little ghost strikes a series of "scary" poses, as the big one appears behind him, waits, then shouts:

BIG GHOST (CONT.)
Boo!

They take off on a chase, which ends with the big ghost laughing himself silly -- in contrast to the forced chuckles in the screening room. On screen, a telegram arrives for the little ghost and he reads it, in a painfully long hold: "BOO!"

ANGLE on Pete: he knows he's dying up there... and, as the LIGHTS come up, people come up to him and think up nice AD LIB things to say -- "Nice stuff with the color" and "Very, uh, pretty." If he had any doubts that he's laid an egg, they're removed when he gets a big handclasp from a smiling Jack Landy.

Slim hangs back as the others leave -- follows Pete into

INT. CORRIDOR

SLIM
Some nice work there. That stuff
with the shadows -- like a
painting.

PETE
Yeah -- so was the audience.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
Oh, yeah -- that.
(looks Pete over)
Say, you okay? You don't have to
throw up or anything...?

PETE
No, no, I'm... spent all that
time making it pretty, I should
have been thinking about the
jokes...

SLIM
Well, that is kind of our policy
here -- make 'em laugh and they
won't notice your looks. But
everybody's got a couple of those
in the closet. Come in here...

They enter

INT. ROOM 15

Slim rumages in the papers on his table.

PETE
It's harder than it looks...

SLIM
Yeah, you find something easy,
we'll both go do it. Here -- you
want to not laugh some time, take
a look at this guy's pictures.
You ever see him?

He hands Pete a MODEL SHEET showing a dozen or so poses of a
squat, gawky RABBIT. Only through modern-day hindsight do we
recognize the embryonic BUGS BUNNY. Pete shakes his head.

SLIM (CONT.)
Yeah, well there's a reason you
haven't. I wonder if you could
do something with him...

Pete looks surprised.

SLIM (CONT.)
There's something there, you
know, but he's such a hick...

PETE
Yeah, well, we'll get along fine,
then...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
(indicates bunny)
Hey, compared to this guy?
You're Fred Astaire.

Pete finds that hard to believe -- till we

CUT TO:

THE RABBIT, HAMMING IT UP

in the cartoon Porky's Hare Hunt, which fills our FRAME. As this proto-Bugs emerges from a hollow stump and winds up a mechanical rabbit, his VOICE tells the story: the gawky opposite of the future Bugs's snappy Brooklynese.

BUNNY
Hyuk hyuk hyuk hyuk!

WIDER ANGLE reveals...

INT. TERMITE TERRACE SCREENING ROOM

...that Pete's here alone, screening the cartoon. As he watches, Clark Chafey drops in and sits beside him.

CLARK
Oh, no -- the rabbit.
(shakes head)
This character has ruined some of
our finest young men, you know.
You think you're the guy?

PETE
You think it's hopeless?

CLARK
No, but he needs a few things,
like a personality. Just seems
like a lot of... you know...
work.

PETE
So?

Clark slouches deeper into his seat, getting cozy.

CLARK
Well -- work is all right, but...
see, I come from a "good family."
We try not to overdo it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

I come from a good family, too --
we just never had any money.
Everything you ever got, it was
second-hand and busted... you
used it anyway.

On screen, the proto-Bugs slaps his knee and calls --

BUNNY

Here I am, fat boy! Hyuk hyuk
hyuk hyuk hyuk!

CLARK

Hmm -- maybe you are the guy.

And Pete nods, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - NIGHT

The lot is dark, but LIGHTS are on at Gustafson Productions.

INT. ROOM 15

Late-night work: the guys are yawning, unshaven, wincing
through boiled-down coffee. Slim is again drawing a sequence
at high speed, deeply absorbed, the world around him shut out.
Animator 1 answers the PHONE, covers the receiver:

ANIMATOR 1

It's for Slim.

NED

His wife?

Animator 1 nods. Ned takes the phone from him and, without a
word to Slim or to Slim's Mrs., hangs it up.

Nearby, Pete finishes some Daffy Duck drawings and hands them
to Rudy, who takes off. Idled for a moment, Pete gets out a
sheet of paper where he's been drawing new versions of the
bunny. He works on his latest one, a dead end -- short-eared,
dark, a step away from Bugs rather than closer.

Pete's concentration is broken by a loud, frustrated EXHALATION
from Slim -- who looks his drawings over and SWEEPS them into
the trash, more violently than last time. Chris Colman comes
over...

CHRIS

Slim, could I see --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But as Chris reaches toward the trash, Slim drops a burning MATCH in, then squirts some rubber-cement thinner on it to make a little BLAZE. Chris gets his hand out just in time, and finds Slim looking at him, his face an unfamiliar storm:

SLIM
(indicates trash)
What do you want, a gag for your shrimp -- ?

He stops himself, looks at Chris -- the big guy looks as if he's been smacked, and everyone is spooked by Slim acting as mean to Chris as he was kind before.

SLIM
Chris -- I'm sorry, I didn't mean...

CHRIS
It's okay --

SLIM
(indicates trash)
It's just, they're -- I'm...

CHRIS
It's okay.

Nothing Slim can say -- he leaves the room. A spooked beat... then guys start working again, but without the conversations.

On Pete: he tries to go back to the bunny, but can't. He rubs his neck, fighting fatigue, then slips out of the room...

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH

In the booth of the projection room, Pete finishes threading up a reel, flips on the projector, and watches:

The Looney Tunes LOGO, then a TITLE -- Porky in Wackyland -- with supervising credit for Slim and (bigger) producing credit for Mort. As the picture starts, a FRAME-filling NEWSPAPER HEADLINE announces, "PORKY HUNTS RARE DO-DO BIRD WORTH \$4,000,000,000,000."

INT. PROJECTION ROOM

Pete goes into the projection room, drops into a seat. On screen, Porky goes past a SIGN reading "WELCOME TO WACKYLAND. IT CAN HAPPEN HERE"... into a surrealist LANDSCAPE filled with capering, Kilroy-ish GUYS and weird gags, like a BICYCLE HORN with legs that walks around BEEPING itself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The picture is a pure look into Slim: he's pushed the limits of the cartoon form and of his own eccentric imagination -- an imagination that sees the world as a series of booby traps...

SLIM (O.S.)

What are you running that for?

Pete, startled, looks to see Slim settling in next to him.

PETE

It's great --

SLIM

(shakes head)

Couple gags that worked... but
you see how it is, they never
give you the time...

On screen, Porky gazes eagerly across a MOAT at a CASTLE with a neon SIGN reading "THE DO-DO."

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Introducing... in person... the
do-do!

And the DO-DO, a long-beaked bird, comes out of the castle, crosses the moat in a boat, drops anchor (sinking the boat), and encounters Porky, who asks:

PORKY

Are you really the 1-last of the
d-do-do's?

The do-do BOWLS Porky over with his long neck, answers...

DO-DO

Yes, I'm really da last of da do-
do's...

... then starts scat-singing as he KICKS Porky in the stomach, DANCES over him and gets away:

DO-DO (CONT.)

Doh doh de voh-de-oh-doh...

In the screening room, Slim watches his own work with critical impatience, while Pete admires it.

PETE

This part here...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A crescendo of frustration for Porky: the do-do escapes in a floating ELEVATOR, pops out of a flying WARNER BROS. SHIELD to SHOOT Porky with a slingshot, and replaces the cartoon's pastoral BACKDROP with a BRICK WALL for Porky to SMACK into.

PETE (CONT.)

Okay -- tell me if I'm wrong...
it's like the Greek myths, with
all the metamorphosis, like the
guy's nose or the bicycle horn
walking around -- but then when
the do-do comes in, and he moves
the backdrop -- because he knows
it's a cartoon, but Porky can't
do that, so for him it's not a
cartoon, but -- that's why it's
a cartoon, it's the joke on top
of the joke, so he's --

Slim isn't being unkind when he answers:

SLIM

Oh, yeah... that'd be nice.

PETE

What would?

SLIM

If you could do it by thinking.

He stands up, watches for another moment, then leaves. On the screen, Porky finally grabs the bird...

PORKY (CONT.)

Oh boy! I got the l-last of the
do-do's!

DO-DO

That's right -- I'm really da
last of da do-do's... ain't I,
fella's?

...and ANOTHER THOUSAND DO-DO's come out of nowhere,
overwhelming Porky...

DO-DO'S

Yeah! Whooo-whoooo!

...as the cartoon IRISES OUT.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TERMITE TERRACE (RECEPTION AREA) - MORNING

Pete, arriving for work, greets Sheila.

PETE
Good morning.

SHEILA
Good morning to you.

Pete wonders why her voice holds a pointed meaning, and why she looks at him through new eyes. He heads down the hall...

INT. ROOM 15

... and his curiosity is answered as he enters 15. All the guys are here, their faces hidden by the identical NEWSPAPERS they're reading: a morning tabloid whose HEADLINE reads CONSTANCE MORROW LOVE DIARY BARED - Hubby: I'll Divorce.

PETE
Oh my God.

Guys lower their papers to APPLAUD as Pete goes pale. Jerry claps him on the back.

JERRY
We don't have enough heroes in
this country, son, but you --

PETE
What does it...

Jerry begins a dramatic reading from the paper:

JERRY
"I don't know how he does it,
Diary. We -- "

For asterisks in the text, Ned mimics a censor's BUZZER.

NED
Baap!

JERRY
" -- till beautiful dawn -- "

CLARK
It's the shy ones you have to
watch.

JERRY
"His name is Peter -- "

NED, CLARK AND JERRY
"Wouldn't you know it, Diary!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY

" -- and he is an artist -- "

Pete grabs the paper from Jerry, stares at the story. Ned opens a drawer of his desk "store," revealing a big stack of copies, and passes one to Jerry, who resumes reading.

JERRY

" -- an artist not just with his hands, but -- "

NED

Baap Baap Baap Baap!

PETE

She's married?

CLARK

Don't worry, that's all being straightened out.

PETE

My last name isn't in here.

JERRY

Nope. As long as nobody saw you driving off with her in the longest car in the world, you --

Slim's PHONE BUZZES. He picks it up.

SLIM

Fifteen.

(to Pete)

It's for you. It's a woman.

CLARK

Of course it's a woman.

PETE

Hello?

Constance's breathy VOICE is on the line.

CONSTANCE (V.O.)

Oh, Peter, hi... I don't know if you've run across this thing in the papers --

The others try to listen -- Pete clamps the phone to his ear.

PETE

Uh, yeah, I have --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CONSTANCE (V.O.)
You know, my maid sold them that
silly diary. Just for a few
thousand dollars, can you
imagine? And all this fuss...
people are so outmoded these
days, don't you think?

PETE
Sure, I --

CONSTANCE (V.O.)
Anyhow, I hope it doesn't cause
you any trouble.

PETE
No, everything's fine here.

CONSTANCE (V.O.)
You're so sweet... oh, here's
Ginger's driver -- do let's keep
in touch.

She hangs up; Pete hands the phone back to Slim.

NED
He plays them like a violin.

Slim's phone BUZZES again; he picks up.

SLIM
Fifteen. Uh huh... okay.
(hangs up; to Pete)
Well, they want you over in
Mort's office.

PETE
I'm twenty-two and my life is
over.

CLARK
Takes a lot of pressure off,
doesn't it?

Pete heads miserably for the corridor.

NED
We'll miss you, kid.

INT. MORT'S OFFICE - DAY

An important-guy office. FAVOR framed PHOTOS on the wall --
Mort trying to look jolly with stripped-in cartoon characters.
PAN to the real Mort, on a heated PHONE CALL...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORT

...You ever pull anything like
this again, I'll tear your
goddamn heart out for you...

... as a SECRETARY shows the frightened Pete in.

MORT (CONT.)

...okay. Now how about lunch
this week?... Good.

Mort hangs up, consults a note for Pete's name.

MORT (CONT.)

Mister Nougat, our friends here
at the studio are very unhappy
this morning. Do you know why
they're unhappy?

PETE

Yes, sir --

MORT

Because their biggest female star
just made herself look like the
whore of Backgammon there in the
newspapers, and now I hear that
one of my employees is said to be
responsible. Is that true?

PETE

Yes sir, it is. It was very
foolish of me --

MORT

Foolish? That suit is foolish.
What you did is stupid!

PETE

Yes, sir.

MORT

You take America's sweetheart,
and now America's probably scared
they're gonna catch something
from her.

PETE

Sir, I hope not. I mean --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MORT
Mister Warner is a very moral
man. How would you like it if we
lost our contract with Warner
Brothers and then we're all out
of work, not just you?

PETE
I'm out of -- ?

MORT
Sit down.

Pete does. Beat, then:

MORT (CONT.)
Was it worth it?

PETE
Sir?

MORT
With Miss Morrow. Was it...
worth it?

PETE
Oh. I -- don't really remember
it, sir.

MORT
You don't remember? That's a
hell of a thing. That's the
caliber of people we hire now,
you don't remember.

PETE
We... I'd been drinking --

MORT
You drink a lot, son?

PETE
I thought I did, in art school.
But, looking back, I can see that
it wasn't that much at all,
really.

MORT
Uh huh. Well, get out of here,
I've got a lot to do...

Mort reaches for the Racing Form and the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PETE
Um -- I'm fired?

MORT
Hell, no. If I fire you, they know it's one of my people, and then I have to go upstairs and listen to Mister Warner talk about decent family values for two and a half hours. Is that what you want to see happen?

PETE
No sir.

MORT
So get back to work and keep your mouth shut.

PETE
Thank you --

Mort picks up the phone, waves Pete out of the office.

MORT
(to himself)
Doesn't remember...

Pete slips out the door, and --

EXT. WARNERS LOT

-- runs right into Dot, who's racking costumes. A beat, then:

PETE
Hi.

DOT
(looks up)
Hello.

PETE
Um -- how've you been?

DOT
Oh, busy. Not as busy as some people...

But she smiles a little as she says it -- if she's mad, she's keeping a cool lid on it. She keeps working as they talk.

PETE
I don't suppose there's any point in me explaining myself...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOT

Well, I'm sure it'd be something to hear. But you don't have to explain yourself to me. You and I weren't --

PETE

No, no -- I mean, we...

DOT

I just think it might be better if we weren't seen together. I'm just a costumer, and we're supposed to lead somewhat normal --

PETE

Well, wait a minute... I mean, people don't know who the --

At that moment, two WOMEN studio workers walk past across the street. They spot Pete, GIGGLE and talk in hushed voices.

PETE (CONT.)

Right. Well, uh...

She's still bright and cool as Midwestern autumn:

DOT

'Bye.

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - AFTERNOON

Pete finds Slim waiting at the entrance.

SLIM

What's the deal?

They go inside.

INT. TERMITE TERRACE

PETE

I'm still on.

Sheila hears that, looks up happily as they head for 15.

SLIM

You don't look happy.

PETE

I'm happy I'm still on, I'm not happy I'm an idiot. Did you ever do anything this stupid?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
No. 'Course, there's a few
things this stupid I wish I
had...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - LATE AFTERNOON

A few weeks later. The Western street is now a British MEWS,
with ACTORS in coal-miner dress knocking off for the day.

INT. ROOM 15

Only four guys in the room: Pete's fooling with the bunny
again; Jerry's doing a crossword; Ned's reading a gun magazine.
It's the kind of idling they do to bug Lou, but this time it's
no stunt: they're becalmed...

...waiting on Slim, who stands at the corkboard, staring at a
row of Daffy gag drawings. He's been there a long time, in one
of his dazes. Finally Ned braves it:

NED
Uh, Slim, if this isn't gonna be
today...

Slim looks around -- realizes it's late and that most everyone
has gone home.

SLIM
Oh -- yeah, you guys...

He gives a wave -- Ned and Jerry leave, but Pete stays, goes
over to the board, looks at the sequence, and points to a gap
about three drawings wide.

PETE
A gag for there, right?

Slim nods heavily.

PETE (CONT.)
Okay, ah... how about if he --

SLIM
I thought of that.

He turns and looks at Pete -- it's like the look we saw when he
burned his drawings, and Pete backs off.

PETE
Maybe I'll, uh, get going here...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim nods, his eyes back to burning a hole in the space between the drawings. Pete starts out of the room but, in the doorway, runs into the cameraman we saw photographing cels before.

CAMERAMAN

Hey, Pete, we're --

Pete shushes him, moves him into

INT. CORRIDOR

CAMERAMAN

-- we're way behind on this Daffy thing, I don't know if we're gonna make it...

PETE

We'll make it -- Slim's last sequence is going to the guys in the morning.

CAMERAMAN

(dubious)

O-kay...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WARNERS LOT - DAWN

The first faint rays of dawn break over Hollywood...

INT. TERMITE TERRACE

...as Pete walks in, through an empty reception area...

INT. ROOM 15

...and into 15, where Slim sleeps, his head on his table. Pete gets close enough to look at the papers near Slim's hand: a few false starts with angry cross-outs. Pete steps back --

-- and RATTLES a desk caddy. Slim stirs, Pete freezes... Slim goes back to sleep. Pete tiptoes to the corkboard... and, with a deep breath, fishes three drawings from his pocket. He pins them up in the gap, slips out of the room...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - MORNING

A couple of hours later -- animators arriving for work.

INT. ROOM 15

As the SOUND of AD LIB GREETINGS drifts in from O.S., Slim wakes with a start, grabs his bearings. He sees the corkboard -- and the three new drawings that match his style...

...and the first few guys come into the room.

JERRY

Hey, Slim -- what'd you, stay all night?

SLIM

Just about.

Pete comes in with the next knot of guys. Jerry looks at the corkboard.

JERRY

Hey, you got it.
(looks over gag)
That's a laugh, I bet.

SLIM

Yeah, I think so...

His eyes meet Pete's for the quickest instant, then go back to Jerry and the board.

NED

We'll get started. You should get some sleep...

As Ned and Jerry start taking the drawings down, Slim and Pete are alone at Slim's table.

PETE

(sotto voce)
You mad?

SLIM

Not at you.

Before Pete can answer, the room quiets: Mort and Lou are here.

MORT

Boys, if I could have your attention. As I'm sure you know, these are difficult times in the business of making people happy. We're going to be cutting some corners around here. It'll require everybody pulling together, and some people leaving entirely --

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SLIM
People leaving, what are you --

MORT
It's just cutting corners. We'll
let you know the dimensions.

LOU
Don't let us keep you from
anything in progress here.

Mort and Lou give the unshaven Slim a pointed once-over and leave. The troops look expectantly toward Slim, but he has no response. Pete leaps into the breach:

PETE
Well, you guys heard Mister
Gustafson...

The assistants look nervous -- but Pete picks up some SCISSORS and SNIPS THE CORNERS off a drawing on the board. He hands an Exacto knife to an assistant...

ASSISTANT
Oh. Right...

...who joins in... as Jerry INKS a dotted line on the corner of a table, and other guys roll up their sleeves...

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 15-DAY

CLOSE on more CORNERS being cut: SAWS slicing them off drafting tables, SCISSORS snipping them off exposure sheets, etc.

WIDER ANGLE reveals guys cutting every corner they can find. Pete, sawing one off a door, stops as Jack Landy and Slim appear in the doorway, gesturing Pete into the corridor.

SLIM
Pete -- got a minute?

INT. CORRIDOR - PETE, SLIM, LANDY

SLIM
Don't worry, it's good. For you
two, anyway. You're gonna take
over on Beans.

LANDY
Directing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
Yeah, directing and layouts. You
can split it up. They've got
Fred taking early retirement --

LANDY
This is great.
(to Pete)
Get your stuff, I'll meet you in
there. Room Eleven.

He goes O.S., and Pete and Slim start back toward Room 15.

SLIM
How about that, you get another
chance directing.

PETE
Yeah, and I know how to do it
right this time -- dying to...
but, uh...

SLIM
What?

PETE
Well, I know Jack's a good guy
and all...

SLIM
He is? First I've heard of it.

PETE
Okay, right --

SLIM
You were brought up well. That's
how it is, isn't it -- you get
what you want but there's --

He's interrupted as Chris Colman comes up to them, toting a
packed cardboard box, shook up but trying not to show it.

CHRIS
Hi, Slim. Pete. I guess I won't
be seeing you guys...

SLIM
What are you talking about?

CHRIS
Lou just told me they're letting
me go, part of this economy thing --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Slim SEES Lou Brand at the end of the corridor.

SLIM
Hey, Lou!

CHRIS
Slim, don't --

Slim hurries to accost Lou as Chris and Pete hang back.

SLIM
Where's Mort?

LOU
Mort's in conference, what's --

SLIM
The hell is this about firing
Colman?

LOU
How about if you draw the little
ducks and let us --

Slim stays with Lou as he walks -- FOLLOW them past 15, toward
the exit at the end of the corridor.

SLIM
You know, you guys are geniuses.
He does more drawings in a day --

LOU
That's just it. It's too many
drawings, that's the whole
problem here. Your guys
especially, every little thing in
the frame is jumping around --

SLIM
The hell do you know about --

LOU
I know, I'm the jerk, you play
jokes on me, swell. Everything's
a joke, bunch of kids, somebody's
gotta be the grownups --

SLIM
Oh, bullshit. You know, they're
having a strike at RKO over crap
just like this --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LOU
Yeah, and the Reds at RKO are
getting their ass kicked by the
sheriff's deputies, and that's
fine with RKO.

He shakes Slim off, gets out the door. Slim turns back toward
15, with Pete joining him.

SLIM
Where's Chris?

PETE
He left. Slim, maybe you could
talk to Mister Warner directly --

SLIM
Mister Warner thinks we make
Mickey Mouse here.

PETE
No, but really --
(catches Slim's look)
Really?

SLIM
Goddamn it!

Pete hurries to catch up with Slim --

INT. ROOM 15

-- as he goes into 15 and lashes an angry hand across his
drawing table. It CRASHES to the floor, his work flying off.
Slim looks around, red-faced --

-- and leaves the room, almost knocking into Landy, who's seen
the outburst from the doorway. Guys right Slim's table, and
Pete's about to go after him, but Sheila comes in, with a new
sheaf of "ORGANIZE!" flyers.

SHEILA
Union meeting on Wednesday, boys.
Maybe you should stop in this
time...

The guys start stashing the fliers away again.

SHEILA
Look, don't you guys get it --

JERRY
Sheila, if we show up at one of
those things, we could get --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
I showed up at one.

The other guys turn and look at him, surprised.

PETE (CONT.)
They were talking about this
thing, cause for...
(looks to Sheila)

SHEILA
Due cause for termination.

PETE
Yeah. If we had a contract...
they want to fire someone like
Chris, they need a reason for it.
Not just 'cause he's the guy that
works in the corner and they
don't notice him, they have to --

ANIMATOR 2
Yeah, but look --

Landy steps in to pull Pete away.

LANDY
Excuse me, Comrades -- come on...

They head out into

INT. CORRIDOR

LANDY
The hell was all that with Slim?

PETE
They canned Chris Colman.

LANDY
Well, yeah, they canned a few
people. Doesn't call for a grand
opera. You know, Slim's never
been wrapped all that tight, but
he's really getting goofy lately.

PETE
He's not goofy. He's talented,
and they're --

LANDY
Hey, a lot of guys are talented,
they don't do that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

He flies off the handle. It's a lot of strain on him, these cutbacks and all, he takes it --

They've arrived at Room 11 -- they stand out in the hall.

LANDY

Yeah, well, if you play jokes half the day, and then you go through agony over one gag the other half, it's a little hard to get the work out. We're not gonna do it that way.

PETE

We're not, huh?

LANDY

No, we're gonna do it like a business. Beans the cat, you draw three ovals and a tail, you got a few gags -- boom, we get it out and everybody goes away happy. C'mon.

He gestures toward the doorway.

PETE

I'll be there in a minute.

He starts toward Room 15 -- Landy calls after him:

LANDY

Hey, you don't really buy all that union crap, do you?

PETE

No, Jack, I just like the folk songs.

As Pete escapes down the hall,

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ACE CAIN'S BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

A few days later -- happy hour at a cheerful DIVE on Western.

INT. ACE CAIN'S

Terrace people are prominent in the CROWD as Landy comes in. In place of his usual confidence, he looks shaken and pale. He goes over to Pete, who's with other animators at the bar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANDY

Hey, Pete... you got a minute?

PETE

Sure, what's...

Landy takes Pete to an out-of-the-way table; they sit.

LANDY

Don't tell anyone about this, okay? I just came from the doctor. I've got one of these heart things, some -- valve thing in there. They always told me, just live with it, you know? So, but now he says... I can't.

PETE

You can't -- ?

LANDY

Live. He says to me, a year, maybe two years... That's with no screwing, no roller coasters, no bad news -- boy, try sticking to that one these days...

PETE

Jesus, Jack --

LANDY

I mean it, though, don't tell anybody. Look, I have to ask you something, and feel free to say no. Would it be okay if you did the layouts on our stuff, and I did the directing?

PETE

Um -- sure, Jack --

LANDY

I know you were looking forward to it, trying directing again --

PETE

No, it's... I've got time --
(quickly)
I mean --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANDY

It's okay. See, I wouldn't ask but, you know, I take care of my mom, and... Right now, you and I are each getting sixty-five a week. This way I'd get seventy-five, just till...

PETE

Sure.

LANDY

Thanks. Boy, you go along and you think your biggest problem is to get ahead in the world...

PETE

Jack, anything you want's okay with me, but -- working in there, are you sure that's how you want to spend the...

LANDY

Well... making kids laugh -- that's not such a bad way, is it?

He fights back a tear, Pete gives his arm a squeeze, and we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOM 11 - DAY

With the room lights down, Pete, Landy, and a couple of ASSISTANTS are running a nearly-finished cartoon, using a blank wall of Room 11 as a screen.

"The Fire Alarm" makes "Ghost Wanted" look hilarious. Pete winces as Beans's nephews HAM AND EX dance and squeak mechanically and, in the cartoon's boffo finish, BEANS, a born second-stringer, yanks the kids' tails up to spank them. As room LIGHTS come up, Landy notices Pete's pained look.

LANDY

What, what is it?

PETE

We ought to add in some drawings on the little guys. They look like wind-up toys.

LANDY

Come on, we're behind as it is... that strike happens, it's gonna get worse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANIMATOR

The strike is happening. The
locals took a vote last night --

LANDY

Damn it. We don't have time...

He pulls the reel off the projector, starts toward the door.

LANDY (CONT.)

I'm gonna tell 'em to lock this
one -- maybe we can get it out of
here before this thing starts.

PETE

Couldn't we at least --

LANDY

No we couldn't at least. It's
just something to run so people
can take a leak before the
gangsters come on, okay? Jeez...

He walks out.

ANIMATOR

Boy, what's with him?

PETE

It's not his fault. I mean
it's... don't worry about it.

The animator doesn't get it, but goes back to his desk. Pete
sits down, brooding, absently drawing -- then sees he's done a
SKETCH of Dot Chenault. He crumples it, tosses it aside.

CUT TO:

EXT. WARNER BROS. STUDIO - THE STRIKE - DAY

Intersections around the studio are blocked by BUSES,
BARRICADES, and lines of COPS with batons ready. A column of
MARCHERS passes the studio gates, carrying American FLAGS and
PICKET SIGNS reading Unfair! and Contract Now! TENSION fills
the noisy air and angry faces...

... but as the line moves, CAMERA spots the strike's "comic
relief": the Termite Terrace contingent, led by Sheila and
Pete. The animators carry SIGNS with pictures of their
characters looking underfed, wearing barrels or turning out
empty pockets. Each sign has a pair of HOLES in it, and a
real, prison-type CUFF around the character's leg. A CHAIN
connects the cuffs...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...and a similar prop CHAIN links the ankles of the animators. On the signs, the funny animals say Can't Feed My Ducklings!... \$8 a Week -- That's Looney!... and a half-drawn Porky Pig asks Where's the Rest of Me?, with the words Animators on Strike over the missing area.

A CAR tries to turn in at the studio gate. Picketers surge angrily around it, shouting "Don't cross!", but COPS move in to get the car through. A Sheriff's DEPUTY pulls a STRIKER off the car. The striker SHOUTS at him, they trade SHOVELS...

... and that does it -- the line of cops BREAKS toward the strikers. A hectic SERIES OF SHOTS:

COPS lighting into strikers with batons... a DEPUTY pushing a newsreel PHOTOGRAPHER back from the action... CLARK throwing his hands up to fend off a baton... picket signs SPLINTERING, an American FLAG fluttering to the ground...

The cops turn on FIRE HOSES, knocking picketers down. As PETE kicks free of his prop cuffs, he SPOTS:

DOT, nearby, caught in a knot of panicking STRIKERS as COPS bear down. Furious BATONS move in on her --

-- and Pete breaks over that way, ducking a DEPUTY's baton by an inch, pushing through the crowd... he yanks Dot free, but takes a SMACK on the head from a baton, as we INTERCUT:

CARTOON IMAGE

A beat of Looney Tune VIOLENCE: Elmer Fudd CLOBBERS a bear with a shotgun. We FLICKER back to the LIVE-ACTION riot... then to more cartoon violence: an ANVIL flattening Daffy Duck...

...and back to LIVE ACTION, in an ANGLE behind a parked BUS with IATSE insignia. Pete, Dot, and a few other STRIKERS have ducked to safety back here.

A union MEDIC, hurrying to bandage the fast-bleeding gash on Pete's head, is watched anxiously by the other strikers and Dot, who cradles one of her arms in the other.

MEDIC

He'll be okay... hold still for me, pal.

DOT

You could've gotten killed.

MEDIC

You're a fine one to talk, sis -- that arm's busted good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dot looks at him, surprised -- her attention was on Pete. In b.g., the MELEE is breaking up, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOT'S BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Her downtown L.A. residence hotel.

INT. DOT'S APARTMENT

A victory of taste over budget, especially in the cheerful fabrics of the drapes and furniture. The only messy elements in the scene are Pete, sprawled on a couch with his field-dressed head, and Dot, her arm set, flopped in an adjacent chair. Aspirin bottles, more bandages, etc., are prominent.

PETE

This place isn't half as bad as
you made out.

He tries to look around a little more, but it hurts his neck -- he slips back into place, as Dot's prowling CAT gives him the suspicious eye.

DOT

Thanks. It's the fabrics. When
I make a costume, I get to keep
the leftovers. That loveseat?
Ginger Rogers wore that in
Bachelor Mother.

PETE

No kidding.

DOT

The curtains are Rita Hayworth in --
(tries to point)
Ouch. How's your head?

PETE

It's okay. I'll be out of here
before you know it.

DOT

I didn't mean to rush you. It's
no trouble at --

PETE

Cut it out, will you?

DOT

Cut what out?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
Being so damn polite. "It's no trouble." You wish I was out of here already.

DOT
You don't know what I wish.

PETE
Well, whatever it is, I can count on you not to say it, can't I?

She leans toward him, painfully.

DOT
You mind my asking what this is about?

PETE
When that -- stuff came out in the newspaper...

DOT
On June sixteenth?

Beat.

PETE
Yeah, June sixteenth. You acted like you didn't care at all about -- what happened, you only cared about if people saw you...

DOT
I cared. I wished you would drop dead. Maybe I still do.

PETE
That's better.

He carefully raises himself, so they're facing each other.

PETE (CONT.)
If I'd have thought we were -- you know... I tried to kiss you that time, I know it wasn't the third time out yet, but --

DOT
That wasn't it.

PETE
Yeah? What was?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DOT
All that stuff you were saying
about wanting to make those
cartoons and...

PETE
What's wrong with cartoons?

DOT
Nothing, but -- wanting things so
much, it's a good way to get your
head handed to you. Especially
out here. I don't know, it
scared me.

PETE
' You didn't say that either.

DOT
People don't say everything.

PETE
Yeah, you don't say everything,
you don't try and do everything,
and then one day you get a hit on
the head and maybe it's one they
can't bandage up, maybe you're
all through and you never even
came out and --
(stops for breath)
I'm sorry, I...

DOT
No --

PETE
But... it's okay to want things --

DOT
Sshh. I know.

And, gingerly, they move just close enough to KISS...

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - DAY

CLOSE on an "ON STRIKE" sign taped over the front doors to the
building... and HANDS tearing it down.

WIDER ANGLE reveals the hands belong to the Terrace crowd,
returning in triumph, carrying Sheila on their shoulders.

INT. ROOM 11

Pete, Landy, and the assistants return to the hastily vacated room -- windows are thrown open, dust blown off desks, science experiments found growing in abandoned cups of coffee.

LANDY

Okay, let's get back to work.

ASSISTANT

You bet... hey, when's overtime start?

ANGLE on Pete, at his table -- he finds his crumpled sketch of Dot. He smooths it out, picks up a pen to ink it, and we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

CLOSE on the DRAWING -- farther along, with Pete's hand now adding colored pencil. The handwritten words near the portrait indicate that he's writing another letter home.

PETE (V.O.)

Her name's Dot Chenault...

INT. PETE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

NEW ANGLE reveals he's writing the letter at a drafting table in a new, less hovel-like apartment. We see furnishings showing Dot's touch; framed cels signed by Pete's colleagues.

PETE (V.O.)

She's from Landover, Missouri,
not too far from Joplin...

EXT. STREETS/PETE'S CAR - DUSK

Pete drives his '35 Ford up Beachwood Canyon, with Dot his passenger. The letter V.O. continues:

PETE

We're going over to my boss's
house for dinner this evening.
It's been a little rough at work
lately -- it'll be good to see
him at home...

EXT. SLIM'S HOUSE - DUSK

They stop at a modest but pretty house halfway up the canyon.

INT. PARLOR

Pete, Dot and Slim are listening to a NEWSCAST on the cathedral-type RADIO. Slim glowers, absorbed in the news.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
... the Nazi blitzkrieg continues
its bloody siege of Poland...

SLIM
Makes you want to go out and make
some zany cartoons, doesn't it?

PETE
Well... maybe that's what people
need, when --

SLIM
(indicates radio)
Jesus, they need a safe place to
hide. Nobody to come around and
kill them.

Beat.

DOT
I think I'll go see if I can
help.

INT. KITCHEN

Dot chops onions as Slim's wife MADELEINE tears lettuce. Madeleine's in her late 40s, a little faded, and has been drinking today. Dot admires the view from the window.

DOT
This is such a nice house.

MADELEINE
Oh, sure it is. I have my family
come out from back east and think
they're going to see some
wonderful Hollywood house, and
then they come see this. No...
Slim is one of these guys, he
doesn't know where the money is
and he wouldn't know how to get
it if he did.

INT. DINING ROOM

The two couples eating.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Dot's been doing the costumes on this musical, with Ray Bolger? I went over there --

MADELEINE

Career girl, that's fine. That was never a choice for me.

(indicates Slim)

I've got a full-time job trying to keep the wheels on this one.

SLIM

Oh, I'm not as bad as all that.

MADELEINE

Sure you're not. It's like taking care of a kid. You don't know if he's listening to you or he's off someplace in goo-goo land. I thought that was charming, at one time.

SLIM

Jeez, Madeleine, you make all this nice food, now you're gonna give these two acid indigestion --

MADELEINE

Well, I could get their opinion, because I never get to talk to anyone, we never --

SLIM

That's not --

MADELEINE

He does whatever he does at work, and then he comes home and stares in the fireplace all night like somebody just died and you don't get three words out of him. Now and then he runs and scribbles something down and sticks it in his pocket like a squirrel, that's the big highlight --

SLIM

You know, call me a dreamer, but I thought maybe we could just give these two a square meal and kind of skip the --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADELEINE
Oh, the poor man, he suffers so.

SLIM
No, I just --

MADELEINE
He's tortured because he's an
artist, see, or 'cause he's not
an artist, I forget which one --

PETE
I know which one.

MADELEINE
Lucky you. Well, people don't
live like this, that's the --

DOT
You know, Pete says what they do
is some of the hardest work he --

MADELEINE
"Pete says. I wouldn't know, but
Pete says." You two are in the
days of the hot pants, I can see
that.

PETE
Ma'am --

SLIM
Jesus, Madeleine --

MADELEINE
Oh, balls.

A beat of SILENCE before we

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET/INT. PETE'S CAR - NIGHT

Pete and Dot drive higher up the canyon.

PETE
Well, that was nice. You want to
go see your boss now?

DOT
God...

The street ends at a fire road, with a view of the Valley.
Pete parks -- they sit a moment in silence before:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
Dot? Would you like to get
married?

A beat, and then Dot starts to LAUGH.

PETE (CONT.)
Just a thought.

DOT
I'm sorry. You do have a gift
for timing, though. It's like
asking someone to go sailing the
day after the Titanic.

PETE
I know, that wasn't much of an
advertisement.

Beat.

DOT
They must have thought they'd be
happy.

PETE
Maybe. Maybe they just felt bad
enough without being alone on top
of it.

DOT
Yeah, but that's not enough.

PETE
No, I know.

He reaches for the ignition, but Dot interrupts him:

DOT
Anyway... yes.

Off Pete's TAKE,

CUT TO:

INT. MORT'S OFFICE

Pete is having an audience with Mort and Lou, who divide their
attention between him and the paperwork on the desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
...we'll be getting married in a couple of months, and we'll be looking for a house and so on, so if it would be possible to have an increase, it would --

MORT
That's a pretty expensive unit already, the Beans the Cat.
(to Lou)
Initial here.

PETE
Well, it's just me and Jack and --

MORT
We're paying Landy a hundred twenty-five a week.

PETE
What?

LOU
He said it was fine with you.

MORT
Said you talked it all over.

MORT
(to Lou)
Both copies.

INT. CORRIDOR

As Pete comes out of Mort's office, steamed, he runs into Ned, Jerry, and Animator 1, who join him walking.

JERRY
Hey, stranger --
(indicates Room 11)
-- how's it going in there?

PETE
(tightly)
Oh... not bad.

NED
See, he's in heaven.

ANIMATOR 1
Must be Landy's fatal liver disease acting up again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY
Liver? I thought it was a tragic
kidney condition.

NED
It was one of the variety meats,
we know that.

ANIMATOR 1
I lent him money for six months
on that liver thing, I'm so
stupid...

As Pete considers how stupid he is,

CUT TO:

INT. DOT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

where Pete paces angrily as Dot listens:

PETE
...I oughtta just go pop the guy
in the nose.

DOT
Okay. But when he gets up, he's
still the director and you're
still the lay-up guy.

PETE
Layout. And who wants to direct
Beans the goddamn Cat?

A "ROWR" of protest from Dot's cat -- she comforts him.

DOT
I'm just saying, it's not him --
if you want to change things for
yourself...

PETE
Yeah, I know.

He goes to the window, looks out onto the cold downtown street.

PETE (CONT.)
Boy, look at me -- people are out
of work and scrounging out there,
I've got a job and I'm sitting
worrying about my problems.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOT
You're right, let's go out and
have a good time. I'll get my
coat.

PETE
Yeah yeah, very funny...

He gets a sketch pad from his portfolio, opens it.

PETE
You know what this guy's problem
is?

DOT
What guy?

He shows her his pad -- drawings of the pre-Bugs bunny.

PETE
He's crazy, he's going around,
"whooo whoo whoo" all the time,
like a fool. You've already got
Daffy for that. So who's this
guy, the road company?

DOT
Um --

He's doing a fast pencil drawing, muttering as he works:

PETE
Make him smart... nobody's fool.
You try to take advantage, he
sees you coming a mile away...

He rips the drawing out of the pad and shoves it at Dot. It's
a big step closer to the Bugs we know -- taller and slimmer,
but especially cagier, with the famous slyness taking shape in
his eyes. Pete, already at work on another drawing as Dot
studies the first, issues a warning:

PETE (CONT.)
Just try this guy. Just try
him...

CUT TO:

INT. MORT'S OFFICE - DAY

where Pete says the same thing, with a different meaning...

PETE
Just... try him, sir --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...as Pete and Slim show him Pete's drawings of the new bunny.

MORT

I said no.

SLIM

Mort, why not? We want a new character, right?

MORT

This isn't new, he's washed up already. The --

PETE

But, sir, this is a --

MORT

-- goddamn rabbit isn't funny. Disney's had a rabbit, remember? Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Almost put him out of business. But you know what? It didn't. You call that lucky?

PETE

Um --

MORT

Don't you boys have some work to do?

He points to the door -- they gather the drawings and go.

INT. CORRIDOR WITH PETE AND SLIM (CONTINUOUS)

Heading for Room 15.

PETE

How do you stand working for these guys?

SLIM

I don't. I work for some guy that misses lunch so he can buy a ticket. You feel like taking a chance?

PETE

On what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
On your rabbit. My guys are
supposed to be doing another
Porky picture -- that can wait.
Ink and Paint and everybody, they
do what we send 'em... and those
guys --

(indicates Mort's
office)
-- have no idea what we're doing.

PETE
Yeah... unless Landy tells 'em.

SLIM
There is that -- you're in there
with him all day, when are you
gonna do this?

PETE
Well... what would the rabbit do?

INT. ROOM 11 - LATE AFTERNOON

Everyone in the Beans room has knocked off for the day except
Landy and Pete, and now Landy packs up his portfolio:

LANDY
Guess I'll take off.

PETE
(nods)
I'll just finish up some stuff...

He goes over to Landy, speaks with fine fake solicitude:

PETE (CONT.)
How are you feeling, Jack?

LANDY
I'm -- I'm all right.

PETE
You've got a lot of guts, Jack.
You know that, don't you?

Landy gives a manful, modest shrug and leaves, unaware of the
evil eye Pete aims at his back. Pete gathers his stuff, looks
in the hall to make sure Landy is gone, and takes off for...

INT. ROOM 15

...where a big CORKBOARD ON WHEELS, covered with Porky Pig gag drawings, obscures a section of the built-in corkboard on the wall. Pete slides the Porky board aside...

...to reveal sequences of Bugs and ELMER FUDD pinned up. Pete fishes a few more drawings from his pockets, pins them up, studies the board for a beat, goes to his table, and starts his second shift of work as the SUN SETS outside.

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE

In TIME-LAPSE, DUSK gives way to NIGHT, then DAWN...

INT. TERMITE TERRACE MEN'S ROOM

...which finds Pete, in the gents', doing three things at once: shaving, going over extremes with Clark, and changing into fresh clothes, using his portfolio as a suitcase. He's punchy from no sleep -- getting by on adrenaline.

PETE
(points to drawing)
...so these frames, anticipation,
he sort of rears back --

Pete's gesturing with his straight razor -- Clark edges clear as he flips to the next drawing.

PETE (CONT.)
-- then boom, he moves --

On "boom," Clark has to duck the razor outright.

PETE (CONT.)
Sorry.

CLARK
That's okay. I think I've got
it. Have you heard about sleep?

PETE
Soon --

Animator 2 ducks his head in.

ANIMATOR 2
Pete, Slim's ready with that
piece in projection.

PETE
Okay.

Clark confiscates the razor as Pete, still putting himself together, leaves the room.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM

Slim, Pete, and voice actor Phil watch some almost-finished footage of the new Bugs: taller, cooler, sneakier. Pete ties his tie while, on screen, Bugs meets a camera-toting Elmer.

SLIM

See, the voice we've got here...

BUGS

What are you doin'? Taking pictures? Nice hobby. Mind if I watch?

The voice is not the Bugs we know today -- rather, it's slow and ingenuous, the last vestige of his farm-boy roots.

SLIM

It doesn't go with the rest of him. He acts sharp, but he sounds like the guy, he comes to town and somebody sells him the Brooklyn Bridge...

Phil nods, and tries a voice -- an Edward Everett Horton type.

PHIL

Excuse me there -- are you taking pictures? Nice hobby, I wonder --

Slim shakes his head. Phil tries again, a la George Raft:

PHIL (CONT.)

'Scuse me -- you takin' pictures? Dat's a nice --

Slim and Pete shake their heads together.

PETE

It's like -- he's not the guy you sell the bridge to, he's the guy that sells you the bridge. A hustler...

PHIL

A Brooklyn thing.

PETE

Um -- I've never been there, but...

Phil tries a new voice. It's the ultimate tout, the self-assured slick with nothing up his sleeve but ten watches -- in short, Bugs Bunny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHIL (CONT.)
Ehhhhh... excuse me there, pal --
takin' pictures? Gee, nice
hobby...

Pete and Slim look at each other -- it's Mr.-Watson-come-here
time... as Phil asks in his own small voice:

PHIL (CONT.)
Is that better?

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 11

Landy runs a gag session for a Beans cartoon ("Westward
Whoa!"), with Pete and assistants trying to supply ideas.
Pete, after several sleepless nights, is also trying to stay
awake -- seeing spots, swilling coffee -- and the inspiration
level of the Beans material isn't helping.

LANDY
Come on, guys, help me out --
Beans has to do something to the
Indian... Pete? Come on.

Pete blinks, mumbles the first thing off the top of his head...

PETE
Uh... he, um, hits him in the ass
with the bear trap.

...which hits the spot with Landy.

LANDY
Yes! See? Simple, funny -- in
the ass is always good -- great
finish. Okay, lunch...

As Pete wobbles toward the door, Jerry comes in.

JERRY
Pete -- wanna get a sandwich?

PETE
Sure.

JERRY
Say, you don't look so hot -- are
you getting any sleep these days?

Pete's alarmed -- why's Jerry saying that in front of Landy?
But Jerry puts an arm over Pete's shoulder, talks man-to-man:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY (CONT.)
Listen -- I know you just got married to this girl and so on, but I think you better slow down a little...

INT. CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

Jerry continues, with Landy still close by.

JERRY
I mean, who am I giving advice to a guy that -- you know -- movie stars... but marriage is different. You want to leave a little something for the later years. It's not gonna go anywhere...

Pete is relieved that his cover isn't blown, but uncomfortable anyway with Jerry's zesty trend...

PETE
Thanks, Jerry --

JERRY
'Course, there are women that'll wear a guy down to nothing. You're running through all the baseball players in your head, you know, trying --

PETE
Thanks, Jerry. Really.

JERRY
No trouble. Now, some guys...

He's interrupted by Ned, who waves them into Room 15.

INT. ROOM 15

Mort and Lou are in there -- Mort, with a letter in hand, addresses a bunch of animators from around the Terrace.

MORT
Boys, I've got news. You know the World's Fair, in New York? You're going there this summer.
(consults letter)
"The Van Brewster Floor Wax Embassy of Fun."
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORT (Cont'd)
They've got a theater for us, we
show cartoons, you guys draw
pictures for people -- two weeks.

ANIMATOR 1
Hey, that's great.

MORT
Half pay, but you get free floor
wax. You know who we need? Your
guy that draws so fast. Colson?

SLIM
Colman. Chris Colman.

Lou goes white.

MORT
Right. He can draw pictures for
the kids all day. Plus he's big,
he can bounce drunks.
(exiting)
See you boys later...

LOU
Uh, Mort, I've got some stuff to
go over with Slim, I'll catch up
with you.

Mort nods, goes off.

LOU (CONT.)
Oh my God...

SLIM
You didn't tell him?

LOU
No. He just told me to cut some
people -- look, where's the guy
now?

SLIM
Don't look at me -- it was your
bright idea.

He hands Lou the phone.

SLIM (CONT.)
I'd start with MGM...

EXT. RAIL YARD - LATE AFTERNOON

A grimy fenced yard in downtown L.A., where big GUYS in dirty coveralls shovel slag into roaring FURNACES. FAVOR one of them: Chris Colman, working numbly in the heat... he SEES a long LIMOUSINE pull up outside the fence.

We watch from across the street, in MOS SILHOUETTE: Slim and a couple of GUYS in suits get out of the limo and go into the yard. Slim talks with Chris... Chris TOSSES his shovel into the furnace, follows the others to the car and gets in. HOLD on the rail yard as the limo pulls out, and

DISSOLVE TO:

CARTOON IMAGE - AERIAL SHOT OF WORLD'S FAIR

Our FRAME is filled by animation, as the cartoon "CAMERA" FLIES IN over a fairly realistic view of the streamlined, futuristic BUILDINGS of the 1939-40 New York World's Fair. An ANNOUNCER speaks in a super-deep-voiced parody of newsreel narration.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
New York, New York! The opening
of the sensational World's
Fair... and our cameras are
there...

A few Brownie BOX CAMERAS go falling through FRAME as we continue flying in on the Fair.

ANNOUNCER (CONT.) (V.O.)
...to see The World of Tomorrow!

TITLE appears briefly: THE WORLD OF TOMORROW... Or Next Thursday at the Very Latest! We now see CROWDS in the Plaza of Light... the huge rooftop CASH REGISTER keeping track of attendance... and the TRYLON and PERISPHERE, an enormous white spire and globe connected by a swooping ramp.

ANNOUNCER (CONT.) (V.O.)
Centerpiece of this remarkable
exposition: the beautiful Trylon
and Perisphere. Inside the
Perisphere...

"CAMERA" follows a line of PEOPLE inside the sphere, to MOVE IN ON "Democracity," a miniature urban world.

ANNOUNCER (CONT.) (V.O.)
A complete miniature city... and --
say -- this little city is having
a World's Fair too... and there's
a really tiny city in here...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As "CAMERA" moves into more miniaturized terrain, the announcer's voice starts sounding as if it's coming from some tiny, distant enclosure...

ANNOUNCER (CONT.) (V.O.)
... and... gee... they're having
a World's Fair too... this is
really, really tiny...

The voice is now even tinier, and panicked:

ANNOUNCER (CONT.) (V.O.)
Hey! Get me out of here!

In a dizzyingly fast reverse, "CAMERA" pulls out of the mini-Perispheres, until we're back outside the first one, with the CROWD passing us. The announcer's voice is back to normal:

ANNOUNCER (CONT.) (V.O.)
There... that's better.

The cartoon CUTS to General Motors' "Futurama" building.

ANNOUNCER (CONT.) (V.O.)
The Fair's theme: the brave new
world of tomorrow -- a world of
science... technology... and
increased leisure time. In the
Major-General Motors exhibit...

Inside the building, people watch futuristic CARS travel a 14-lane HIGHWAY through a Buck Rodgers-ish miniature CITY.

ANNOUNCER (CONT.) (V.O.)
The highway of the future! No
motor mishaps here... because
these cars are radio-controlled.

We MOVE IN on the little cars, which all have ANTENNAE, communicating by lightning-like WAVES with a cathedral-style RADIO in the middle of the track.

As the radio plays a STRAUSS WALTZ, the cars glide serenely along in time... as a TECHNICIAN switches the program to MAMBO music, the cars do an syncopated dance... and, as he switches to coverage of a PRIZE-FIGHT...

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
He hits him with a left jab! A
right hook! A combination!

... the cars go wild and SMASH into each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And, at Constitution Mall...

The cartoon CUTS to a CROWD on Constitution Mall at evening, and the announcer's voice fades out as we

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WORLD'S FAIR - EVENING

a real CROWD, at the real Fair... with Pete and Clark among them. Clark is very hung over, and Pete steadies him as they cross the bright plaza.

PETE
Who did this to you, Clark?

CLARK
Girl from the Belgian pavilion.
She had this brandy... brandy of
the future...

PETE
It ages you, right?

CLARK
What?

PETE
Curb here...

They step onto the sidewalk, and Pete shepherds Clark into the Van Brewster Floor Wax BUILDING. It's another streamlined wonder, with cutout Warners CARTOON CHARACTERS happily wielding mops on the roofline.

INT. VAN BREWSTER PAVILION

The lobby is decorated with MURALS of happy families and Warners cartoon characters using Van Brewster Floor Wax in the home of tomorrow. There are DOORS to an O.S. auditorium, with SIGNS reading LOONEY TUNES CARTOON CARNIVAL. Occasional LAUGHTER leaks from inside.

In the lobby, a few PEOPLE IN BIG-HEAD COSTUMES circulate, greeting kids: a Daffy, a Porky, a Sylvester. The animators meet the public too: Ned flips pencil drawings and talks to TEENAGERS; nearby, Jerry praises a little KID's crayon drawing of Porky.

Slim, with a FILM CAN under his arm, comes over to Pete.

SLIM
Hey, Pete --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pete leans in to read the BUTTON pinned on Slim's lapel.

PETE
What's this -- "I Have Seen the
Future."

SLIM
General Motors exhibit.
(indicates film can)
Look what I got.

PETE
That's -- ?

SLIM
(nods)
Fresh from the lab. You ready?

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH

In the pavilion's projection booth, Slim and Pete give the film can to the PROJECTIONIST. A CARTOON is running -- the antic MUSIC and projector noise drown out their voices.

INT. AUDITORIUM

Pete and Slim enter from the lobby and stand at the back of the full house. On the screen, a live-action SHORT is playing: Mort Gustafson, in his office, doing his stiff best to project "warmth" as "America's Mister Laughter."

Where we come in, Mort's back is to CAMERA, as he "works" at an easel hidden by his body. He turns and talks to the audience, revealing a DRAWING of Daffy Duck.

MORT
Hi! Come on in! I was just
putting some finishing touches on
my friend Daffy here. You know --
(attempts chuckle)
-- I get letters from all over
the country, people asking me
what kind of wacky scrape Daffy
is going to get into next...

Slim points Pete's attention along the back wall, to the other lobby doors... where Mort, in person, stands with some big-shot-looking VISITORS. Pete and Slim exchange looks -- here goes nothing. On screen:

MORT
...let's sit back and laugh with
another Looney Tune adventure!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And a CARTOON fills the screen -- "The Wild Hare," with Elmer Fudd telling the CAMERA:

ELMER
Sshhh! Be vewy, vewy quiet --
I'm hunting wabbits.

ANGLE on Mort, thinking "Wait a minute," while, on screen, Bugs emerges from a rabbit hole, munches his carrot, knocks on Elmer's pate, and asks in his new, true voice:

BUGS
Ehhhhh... what's up, Doc?

ELMER
Sshh! I'm hunting wabbits.

BUGS
Uh -- whaddya mean, "wabbits"?

ELMER
You know -- wabbits! Wabbits!

A first LAUGH from the crowd, and a wave of relief on Pete's face. Forget about Mort -- Pete and CAMERA look around at the audience, people of all the world's ethnic groups, laughing, as, on screen, Elmer confers with Bugs:

ELMER
Pardon me, but -- you look just
like a wabbit.

BUGS
(sotto voce)
Uh, c'mere... listen... don't
spread this around, but
confidentially --
(shouts)
I AM A WABBIT!

A big laugh.

SLIM
How's it feel?

PETE
Feels great.

And his survey of the audience turns up a KID of about six, loving the cartoon -- looking like six-year-old Pete watching Felix the Cat in a barn...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SLIM

You see this -- people from all over the world, and they're not even killing each other. I think you've got it now.

PETE

Got what?

SLIM

"X," the unknown. People like that...

But Mort doesn't -- we see him burn as he ditches his guests and goes into the lobby -- while, on screen, Elmer Fudd goes into an angry tantrum...

ELMER

Wabbits! Guns! Wabbit twaps!
Wabbits wabbits wabbits!

...and the door behind Pete and Slim opens up -- Mort gesturing them angrily into

INT. LOBBY

Mort, steamed, talks as quietly as he can to Pete:

MORT

You son of a bitch! You're running the studio now?

PETE

No, sir, we --

SLIM

Mort --

MORT

(to Slim)

You tell him he could do this?

A wave of LAUGHS from the auditorium O.S.

SLIM

Yeah, and I was right. You hear that in there? That's called "laughing," that's --

MORT

Yeah? How wonderful. Laugh at this: you're fired, pal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
He's fired?

MORT
You want to go with him?

PETE SLIM
Yeah -- No --

PETE
You know something, Mister
Gustafson -- I don't think you
know what you've got here...
these guys --

He points around at some of the Terrace guys, meeting the public in the lobby.

PETE (CONT.)
-- they're doing something for
people --

People are starting to look this way --

MORT
You keep your voice down and --

PETE
-- for people that have to...
have to work for people like you
all day, and the least you can do
is --

MORT
Don't you tell me how to --

He's raising his voice -- Terrace guys and civilians alike are coming over... as Slim's anger builds, the LOOK on his face like the time he burned the drawings...

PETE
All I'm saying --

MORT
-- talking about people are
laughing, you don't even know
it's a goddamn business, who the
hell cares if people --

SLIM
No more!

And suddenly he's HITTING MORT. For a beat, it looks like normal frustration, the guys are on his side --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

-- but Slim keeps at it, hurting Mort now, and Pete and other Terrace guys try to pull him off --

TERRACE GUYS
(variously)
Slim, that's enough, come on,
you're --

-- and the GUY in the Porky Pig costume, a big kid under there, jumps in to help pull Slim back... but Slim, looking more unhinged than before, wheels around, looks into that face he's drawn 10,000 times --

-- and snaps, fiercely LIGHTING INTO THE KID, freeing the frightened Mort but scaring the Terrace guys even worse --

TERRACE GUYS (CONT.)
(variously)
Slim, come on, it's just a kid in
a suit -- Slim, let go of him...

-- but ANGLE on the wildly fighting Slim shows us a face cut off from reality -- a moon of frustration over that I Have Seen the Future button...

EXT. PAVILION - EVENING

...as World's Fair SECURITY GUYS rush to the building, and the evening FIREWORKS SHOW casts its acid glow overhead and we

FADE TO:

EXT. PETE AND DOT'S HOUSE - DUSK

Establishing a small HOUSE in Whitley Terrace -- a fixer-upper in the process of getting new paint, lawn, etc. Pete pulls up in his car and gets out, carrying his portfolio, looking beat.

INT. HOUSE (ENTRYWAY)

Dot is a few months PREGNANT. She lets Pete in, greets him with a kiss.

DOT
How'd it go?

Pete shakes his head -- FOLLOW them to the half-furnished LIVING ROOM, where he sinks into a chair.

PETE (CONT.)
I saw the guy at Disney... He
was nice, they're just not hiring
right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOT
You'll get something.

PETE
Supposed to see Universal
Thursday. I don't know...
(beat)
I talked to... that place.

DOT
What did they say?

PETE
Said he's "stabilized."

DOT
- Can we visit him?

PETE
Soon. You know the last thing he
said to me, before that all
happened? He said I had "X," the
unknown.

DOT
Is that good?

PETE
I wonder. You know, for a long
time, I came out here... all I
wanted was to be just like him.

DOT
I don't think it works to be just
like anybody.

Pete looks at her, nods -- as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WARNERS LOT - DAY

Mort Gustafson is walking down a studio street when --

JACK WARNER (O.S.)
Hey -- Gustanson...

MORT
Mister Warner!

-- he runs into JACK WARNER, 48-year-old king of Hollywood,
going twice as fast in the opposite direction.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK WARNER
Walk me.

Mort reverses course, hurries to keep up.

JACK WARNER (CONT.)
Took my grandson to your show at the World's Fair. This kid, I'm telling you -- you take him to gangsters, he cries, you take him to musicals, he goes to sleep. Anyway, your one with the rabbit, now -- he loves that. Wouldn't shut up about it.

MORT
The one with --

JACK WARNER
I mean, I got a laugh too, he's -- keep the carrot, right?

MORT
Oh -- sure, the carrot, that's --

JACK WARNER
So, more of those. And then you have another thing, because I'll tell you: the mouse is great, but nothing goes on forever.

MORT
The mouse?

JACK WARNER
Yeah, you know...

He spots another EMPLOYEE...

JACK WARNER (CONT.)
Curtiz -- c'mere...

... and leaves Mort to his own devices.

INT. MORT'S OFFICE

Hating to do it, Mort makes a phone call:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORT
Nugent? Listen, ah... I'm
thinking of doing some more
pictures with the rabbit, I'm
wondering if you'd like to come
over and... what?... Well, people
like them --
(grits teeth)
Yeah, congratulations to you
too... very much. Anyway, if
you'll get in here as -- what?

He dislikes this next part so much it's barely intelligible the first time:

MORT (CONT.)
It's -- taking over in Slim's
room... I said "Taking over in
Slim's room." You deaf?

He hangs up, broods a moment -- then tries sketching Bugs on a slip of paper. It's hopeless. He knows it. Into the trash.

EXT. SANITARIUM - DAY

Pete and Dot, in their car, pull up outside a SANITARIUM near L.A.: a big old building on rolling, park-like grounds.

INT. SLIM'S ROOM

Pete and Dot come to the doorway. It's a small room with spare furnishings, no decorations, and a window on the yard.

Slim, in street clothes, sits on a chair beside the bed. Though he's no different physically, he seems diminished since we saw him last -- a little quieter and more hesitant.

SLIM
Hey, Pete... Dot. Come on in.
You guys didn't have to come way
the hell out here.
(at pregnant Dot)
Look at you...

PETE
It's good to see you, Slim. How
you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
Okay, I guess. Boy, Madeleine's
mad as hell. She thinks I'm
doggin' it. Comes out and yells
at me, "There's nothin' wrong
with you!" She never thought
that before. Have a seat...

They sit.

PETE
Um -- the studio called... they
want me to come back.

SLIM
(nods)
You going?

PETE
I don't know. Working for those
guys...

SLIM
You don't work for them --

PETE
Right, I remember, you...

SLIM
I mean, I don't think we've got
anything for you out here...

An exchange of gestures: Slim's says "It's up to you, kid," and
Pete's says he gets it.

DOT
You're not crazy, are you, Slim?

SLIM
I don't know... you beat up the
boss -- mm, maybe. But, you beat
up the boss and a pig...

PETE
You were mad, that's not --

SLIM
You know what I think? It's like
in one of our things -- guy goes
off the cliff, and he's up there
in the air, you know the deal, he
keeps running -- people like that --
and as long as he doesn't look
down... he's fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETE
He always looks, though.

Slim looks around the room.

SLIM
Yeah. Eventually.

He makes a little wave of goodbye, turns back toward the window. Pete and Dot start toward the door...

SLIM (CONT.)
Hey, but, Pete? Don't give those
guys any peace.

PETE
Naah.

Slim nods, and fixes on the window as Pete and Dot leave.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TERMITE TERRACE - ROOM 15

Clark, Ned, Jerry and the rest of Slim's troops are in here, sort of working -- the mood is subdued and, as Pete comes in, conversation quiets altogether. Carefully, he goes over to Slim's vacant table ...and shakes some dust and dead petals out of the neglected bud vase.

With everyone watching, Pete opens his briefcase, takes out a flask of water for the vase... and a fresh bird-of-paradise in florist's paper. He positions the flower, touches the chair, but doesn't sit -- he takes a few Bugs Bunny GAG DRAWINGS from his briefcase, pins them up on the corkboard behind him.

PETE
Okay, the --
(clears froggy throat)
-- the new Bugs picture...

He looks at the guys: is this okay? They look back: go ahead.

PETE (CONT.)
The gag here, Elmer goes for
vacation in the woods and Bugs is
there, driving him crazy... you
figure Elmer, he's gone out and
bought the new tent and
everything --

CLARK
"West and wewaxation at wast!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Not a bad Elmer voice, and the ice starts to break...

PETE

Right, so he sets up the tent --

NED

-- the rabbit pulls the tent down
in his hole, it comes out all
tied in knots...

PETE

Yeah, that's good, try that...

Ned sketches.

JERRY

He could keep him from going to
sleep. That's how you drive
someone crazy.

PETE

Yeah, no kidding -- okay, wait --
Elmer's in the hammock, it's
daytime, Bugs makes him think
it's night -- he could put a pair
of glasses on him and paint them
black, so he --

CLARK

"Oh, bedtime alweddy!"

PETE

-- yeah, so he goes to bed, Bugs
takes the glasses off him, wakes
him up again, "Morning alweddy!"
Elmer jumps up, and Bugs gives us
one of these, "Ain't I a
stinker," or...

JERRY

"Folks, I do this kind of stuff
to him all through the picture!"

PETE

Yeah...

He takes Jerry's passed-forward drawing -- Bugs painting out
the glasses of the sleeping Elmer -- and pins it up.

PETE (CONT.)

...sold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AD LIB talk and sketching continue, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WARNERS LOT - EVENING

The end of the long day. Pete, bushed, gets in his car, drives toward the exit.

EXT. CAHUENGA PASS/INT. PETE'S CAR - NIGHT

Hurrying home through the half-developed countryside, Pete HEARS a distant sound -- eerie, off-key... then HEARS it again, but closer this time...

...and suddenly finds a COYOTE in the roadway, STARING at the oncoming headlights. Pete SWERVES into the opposite lane to miss the animal...

... which runs off the road and onto a low rise, where he stops to HOWL, silhouetted by the low moon. Pete watches, mesmerized -- but the coyote TAKES OFF over the rise and is gone.

INT. PETE AND DOT'S HOUSE - LATER

The living room is coming along. Dot heads for a chair with a book -- stops on the way to see what Pete's reading.

DOT

Roughing It.

PETE

Yeah, Mark Twain... I haven't read it since I was a kid.

(reads)

"The coyote is a long, slim, sick and sorry-looking skeleton, with a furtive and evil eye, and a long sharp face... He has a general slinking expression all over..."

CAMERA moves to Pete's free hand, which is sketching on a gag-size piece of paper. It's a cross between the coyote he saw and the one described by Twain, but with the Looney Tunes approach already transforming the creature...

DOT

Mind the radio?

Pete, absorbed, shakes his head. Dot turns on the floor radio, which warms up...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (CONT.)
 "The coyote is a living,
 breathing allegory of Want. He
 is always hungry... always poor,
 out of luck, and friendless..."

He's interrupted by the radio -- an urgent NEWSCAST:

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
 ...Japanese bombing of the U.S.
 naval station at Pearl Harbor,
 Hawaii, at mid-day today eastern
 time.

Pete and Dot start, stare at the radio.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.) (CONT.)
 Casualties are described as
 heavy. President Roosevelt is
 expected to address Congress
 tomorrow and ask for a
 declaration of war against Japan.
 He has ordered that all Japanese
 citizens be picked up and placed
 under surveillance...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - DAY

A few weeks later. The backlot street is now an ARMY CAMP set,
 with JEEPS, BARRACKS facades, and EXTRAS in uniform.

INT. ROOM 15

Pete and Jerry are at the board, pinning up gags for the Bugs
 cartoon discussed at the story session. Animator 1 comes in
 and admires the work in progress: the board is nearly full.

ANIMATOR 1
 That's just about it, isn't it?

PETE
 Better be. We've got to start
 the training cartoons, we've got
 the Army advisors coming in next
 week...

Clark comes in, carrying an empty cardboard box. He starts
 putting the contents of his desk into it.

CLARK
 Hello and goodbye, men. We sail
 at dawn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY
You got drafted?

CLARK
(shakes head)
Enlisted.
(idealistic)
So that future generations, when
they are bored, will have a
Europe that they can do.

JERRY
(indicates his throat)
You get a lump, don't you?

Landy breezes into the room.

LANDY
Well, fellas, this is so long --
I've had an offer from a bigger
outfit.

Pete goes over to him.

PETE
You have, huh? Well, there's
something I've been wanting to do
for a long time --

He readies a punch, but Landy holds up a hand for "time out."

LANDY
Sure, Pete, go ahead -- take a
shot at me. But you'll have to
stand in line. The Japs... the
Nazis... they get first crack, my
friend.

PETE
You've been drafted?
(Landy nods)
How was the physical?

But Landy steps away, already working on his thousand-yard G.I.
stare, as Ned enters in b.g.

LANDY
I'll see you guys. And if not...
well, happy landings.

He leaves.

NED
The hell was that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JERRY
Private Landy.

NED
Aw, jeez, the country's doomed.
Let's surrender now.

SMASH CUT TO:

CARTOON IMAGE

of Daffy Duck, in Army uniform.

DAFFY
Thurrender? Ha!

He's on solo patrol in a desolate setting at DUSK, talking to himself as he cleans a RIFLE that is twice his height.

DAFFY (CONT.)
We did it before! And we're
gonna do it again, for those who
missed it...

In the cold trees around him, pairs of wicked EYES start to appear. Daffy absently addresses them:

DAFFY (CONT.)
...like you, and you, and...

More of the eyes appear... and move forward, to reveal that they belong to CATS with ominously foreign faces.

DAFFY (CONT.)
...you, and --

Daffy does a take -- he finally realizes he's cornered. The cats move in; he backs away, and... a tiny PELLET drops from nowhere into the midst of the advancing cats. They give it a curious look as it FIZZES on the ground...

...and it GOES OFF, blowing the cats to PIECES. It's the violent image of Ned Welch's dreams -- flying limbs and startled, torn-off heads.

But now a wave of crackling LIGHT comes from the place where the explosion occurred, FREEZING the segmented cats in mid-air -- and STRIPPING them of their outer form to reveal skeletal arrays of small, bright-colored SPHERES, like atoms in a science textbook.

Daffy watches, boggled, as the spheres dissolve to the ground. He regains his bravado, but keeps backing up --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAFFY (CONT.)
Yeah! We'll give 'em the old,
uh...

He backs into a FOX who wears glasses and a white lab coat.
Daffy jumps a few feet --

DAFFY (CONT.)
Aagghh!

FOX
Sshhh! That was our secret
weapon... number Z-X-Seventeen-
squared. It disintegrates the
integrity of their sub-chemical
integration... and gives you
whiter whites. Can you keep a
secret, soldier?

As Daffy stammers an answer, NEW ANGLE REVEALS

INT. ARMY INTELLIGENCE ROOM - DAY

Back in live action, three U.S. Army INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS
watch the cartoon on an office wall. The senior Officer turns
the projector off, as one of the others turns the LIGHTS on.

SENIOR OFFICER
I don't want him to know which
cartoon we're concerned about.
It could be coincidence. But if
he knows something, and he's
holding it back...

He hands the junior men a PHOTOGRAPH of Ned Welch.

SENIOR OFFICER (CONT.)
...the psychological profile will
tell us all about it.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - DAY

The backlot street looks different again -- at first, we might
mistake the CONSTRUCTION GUYS working here for grips or actors.
But they're for real, and they're DEMOLISHING the backlot
"street" of buildings... while a fresh SIGN promises the FUTURE
HOME OF LOONEY TOONS.

INT. TERMITE TERRACE - ROOM 11

There are some new faces here these days -- unfamiliar ARTISTS replacing those who've gone into the service -- but a number of our gang are still around, including Jerry, Ned, and Chris. We SPOT some BUGS BUNNY MERCHANDISING STUFF alongside the older Daffy and Porky products.

Pete, handing Bugs extremes to a couple of young animators, is interrupted by a PHONE CALL --

ANIMATOR
Pete, it's your wife.

PETE
(into phone)
What's up, Dot?

-- and then by a stiff, young, uniformed ARMY ADVISOR.

ADVISOR
Morning, Pete -- see you a minute here?

PETE
(into phone)
Call you back.

Pete hangs up and follows the advisor to the cork board, where DRAWINGS for a training cartoon are pinned up -- Bugs Bunny' taking a rifle apart.

ADVISOR (CONT.)
Take a look at this -- this clearly shows the safety on this ordnance as being knurled.

PETE
We did it from the drawings you guys gave us.

ADVISOR
Oh, those drawings are inoperational. Look at your spec update. That's not knurled.

PETE
Got it. Anything else?

The advisor leads Pete down the board, a few drawings away.

ADVISOR
Does this joke really work?

PETE
Excuse me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADVISOR
It just seems flat to me. Maybe
more of a twist...

Pete blinks.

ADVISOR (CONT.)
Play with it.

As he leaves, a passing young assistant asks Pete:

ASSISTANT
Pete -- have you seen Bambi yet?

PETE
(shrugs)
Yeah. It's pretty.

ASSISTANT
I've got a friend that's an
assistant at Disney's? He said
Walt ran one of your Bugs
pictures for a whole bunch of
guys there. Told 'em he wanted
to see 'em do something that
funny.

That stops Pete -- he reflects on it for a second, till
Animator 2 comes in, gesturing toward the disappearing backlot
"street" next door.

ANIMATOR 2
Boy, I just saw the plans for the
new building... Water coolers.
Linoleum! They're saying
December.

NED
That's so soon...

JERRY
Soon? You hate this place.

NED
Yeah, I'm gonna miss hating it.

Lou Brand comes in, comes over to Pete.

LOU
Pete -- this business over
here...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He leads Pete to another set of gag drawings, with a caricatured HITLER prominent. Lou looks around, makes sure the Army guy is out of earshot before he speaks:

LOU (CONT.)
Aren't we being a little rough on
Hitler here? I mean...
(quieter still)
...we don't know who's going to
win this thing.

PETE
Well, you'll be okay either way.

Lou starts to answer, stops, and leaves, dopping that one out.

PETE (CONT.)
That does it, I'm enlisting.

NED
Coward.

Sheila comes in.

SHEILA
Ned, there's some guys here to
see you.

He follows her out, past Jerry, who's going over gags with two young ANIMATORS. Jerry's happier than we've ever seen him:

JERRY
...and the giraffe says, "Smart
G.I.'s know that social diseases
can be lurking anywhere," and
then we go in on the girl here,
now this part's terrific...

Pete, heading for the corridor, stops at Chris's desk -- Chris is piling up drawings as fast as ever.

PETE
You know, I was thinking -- you
think we could do one that was
just a chase, the whole picture?

Chris answers without looking up from his work:

CHRIS
No talking?

PETE
(not sure)
Mmm...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He goes into the hall...

INT. CORRIDOR

...and has another near-collision with Rudy the runner:

RUDY
Beep beep!

Still thinking, Pete moves on, as we

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 15

In the otherwise unoccupied room, Ned is at his desk with the two plain-clothes Intelligence Officers who've been sent to check him out.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER 1
Mister Welch -- we want to talk
to you about your work. Your
cartoons. The way you handle
certain scenes of...

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER 2
...violence. Conflict.

Ned nods soberly.

NED
I know the stuff you're talking
about. I figured someone'd be
coming around...
(confidential)
See -- I've believed for years
that there are better kinds of --
damage. Better ways to blow
things up. It's kind of my
passion...

The officers exchange a look.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER 2
Better than...?

NED
The way we do it now. Excuse
me...

He has noticed the time on his desk clock. He opens a desk drawer, reaches in with tongs, and comes out with a steaming HOT DOG. The Intelligence Officers are distracted by this, but try to keep up the conversation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER 1
Uh -- and you... know about a
better way...?

NED
I've got lots of better ways.
Not just one.

The agents are intensely curious... as Ned opens another
drawer, takes out a CONDOM.

NED (CONT.)
I've got things that would
devastate them. I mean, why not
just flatten the little bastards.
I've got the drawings...

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER 2
Um... what kind of -- ?

NED
For example --
(secretive)
I've got one involving a
dachshund... a piece of
flypaper... some pepper... and
an electric fan --

He makes an explosive gesture, with the naked hot dog in one
hand and the condom in the other.

NED (CONT.)
Pow!

The wicker BASKET from upstairs appears outside Ned's window.
He puts the condom on it, takes the money off it, opens another
drawer, gets a bun for the hot dog...

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER 1
Um -- how big a piece of flypaper
are we talking about?

NED
(shrugs)
Same size as the dachshund-- six,
seven feet, you know...

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER 2
Six feet?

NED
Sure. But -- jeez, leaving
here... I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The officers look even more confused than before. Ned puts the weenie in the basket, tugs the string; the basket levitates.

NED (CONT.)
You boys are from Disney's,
aren't you? I can tell by the
suits.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKLOT STREET - DAY

On the backlot street beside Termite Terrace, the RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY for the new animation building is taking place. It's a well-attended affair, with Terrace staffers, STUDIO EXECS, and REPORTERS AND PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS.

Jack Warner, golden scissors in hand, introduces Mort:

WARNER
...pleasure to introduce
"America's Mister Laughter" --
our own Mort Gustafson.

MORT
Thank you, Mister Warner. You
know --

But Mort's remarks are interrupted, as an adorable, Depression-waif KID in the Jackie Coogan mold comes running up to him with paper and pencil:

KID
Mister Gustafson, would you make
a picksure of Porky Pig?

"Awwws" and a little APPLAUSE from the crowd. Mort smiles sickly, demurs:

MORT
Uh, of course, son -- later...

But the kid persists --

KID
It's not for me, it's for my
little brother -- he's awful sick
in the hospital, an' the medicine
costs a terrible price, an' it's
his last wish an' 'all...

MORT
Yes, well, later I'll, uh --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KID
Please, Mister --

Mort finally gets hot under the collar --

MORT
I said later --

-- and involuntarily lifts his hand as if to hit the little pest. The kid, a trouper, takes full advantage of the moment, going into a FLINCH and bursting into TEARS. On the flinch, all the photographers' FLASHBULBS POP.

Mort, flustered, makes nice with the kid, but we can just see the photo in tomorrow's papers -- the poor kid recoiling in terror from Mr. Laughter. Jack Warner's expression tells us he can imagine it too.

ANGLE in the crowd finds Pete and Jerry, enjoying the action and speaking sotto voce:

JERRY
Where'd you find the kid?

PETE
Republic. Ten bucks plus lunch.

Jerry hands Pete a few bucks.

JERRY
Cheap at the price.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMY BASE - DAY

A busy Army camp somewhere in the U.S. Among the SOLDIERS heading into a QUONSET HUT, we SPOT Jack Landy -- smartly uniformed, and yakking it up to a few other SOLDIERS as they file inside:

LANDY
You know who's making these training things -- Warner Brothers. I used to run things there -- you know, pretty much...

SOLDIER
Uh huh...

LANDY
Great bunch of guys back there. This oughta be good...

INT. QUONSET HUT

The soldiers, on benches, watch a TRAINING CARTOON in the style of Warner Bros.' "Private Snafu" series. On screen, a platoon of cartoon SOLDIERS marches in neat formation...

CARTOON NARRATOR (V.O.)
... but wait -- who's this?

At the rear of the platoon, an unmistakable CARICATURE OF JACK LANDY is out of step, yakking at the guy next to him...

CARTOON NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT.)
Why, it's Private Looney...

Landy's VOICE is perfectly imitated:

LOONEY
... So I says to him, "Oh yeah?
You an' what Navy?"...

CARTOON NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT.)
... lousing things up for the
whole platoon as usual!

In the quonset-hut crowd, CAMERA finds the real Landy -- horrified.

CARTOON NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT.)
No, he's not a spy for Tojo -- it
just seems that way sometimes.

On screen, Landy's alter ego is in a barracks, throwing stuff into his pack every which way...

CARTOON NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT.)
Looney can't find his field
manual... so he helps himself to
the other guy's!

As Looney SWIPES stuff on screen, the guys around Landy watch him with amused curiosity.

CARTOON NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT.)
On a weekend pass, Looney just
loves to impress the gals with
inside stuff...

Looney, dancing with a girl at a U.S.O. hall:

LOONEY
... but we're all shippin' out in
August, so I figure you and I
haven't got much time...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...as a suspiciously Teutonic-looking WOLF nearby listens in. In the audience, Landy gets still hotter under the collar, as guys POINT to him...

CARTOON NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT.)
We'll be showing you more of
Private Looney's misadventures in
the next twelve films in this
series...

On Landy, mouthing silently: "Twelve?"

CARTOON NARRATOR (v.o.) (cont.)
Meanwhile, don't you be a Private
Looney. There's no room for that
kind of guy in this kind of army --
and this could be a long war...

Off Landy's increasing misery,

CUT TO:

EXT. TERMITE TERRACE - EVENING

Dot parks the Chevy at the curb, goes inside. No longer pregnant, she carries a sleeping BABY in her arms.

INT. ROOM 15

Pete is drawing, cranking work out, oblivious to the late hour and the fact that he's alone -- almost as bad about this as Slim used to be. Dot comes in behind him, whispers:

DOT
Pete.

He starts -- then sees Dot and the kid, and looks at his watch. They whisper:

PETE
I'm sorry.

DOT
It's okay.

Pete looks at the conked-out kid, smiles. They walk quietly to the door.

DOT
Hungry?

PETE
(surprised)
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pete turns out the light...

INT. TERMITE TERRACE - CORRIDOR

...and CAMERA HOLDS, looking down the corridor from Room 15, as they leave the room. We HEAR a final VOICE-OVER letter home from Pete:

PETE (V.O.)
Dear Folks -- They're tearing the building down tomorrow... and opening a new one for us. The termites would've taken this one down anyway...

He reaches into one room after another, turning out lights, as they go.

PETE (V.O.) (CONT.)
...besides, by a few years from now, I doubt anyone's going to remember what we were doing in here...

Other VOICES join in: the "ghosts" of Termite Terrace past, echoing in the corridor:

VOICES (V.O.)
"X," the unknown -- people like that... no shortcuts... count your fingers, hon... my best work will never be seen by the average public... this little guy, Scamp Shrimpy...

Pete and Dot recede from CAMERA, the building falling into darkness behind them...

PETE (V.O.)
...but it was fun for us, and fun for people that were waiting for the feature to start... which is funny -- sometimes the stuff you see while you're waiting for things turns out to be the best stuff of all...

Pete and Dot go out the door in b.g.... as CAMERA, still in Room 15, PANS across pictures of Bugs, Porky, Daffy...

PETE (V.O.) (CONT.)
Anyhow -- love from all of us...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...stopping at Pete's table, and MOVING IN on his last DRAWING of the day: a bright-eyed, imperturbable ROADRUNNER...

PETE (V.O.) (CONT.)
...to all of you...

...and the Roadrunner in Pete's drawing ANIMATES, starts RUNNING, and speaks in Rudy the runner's VOICE:

ROADRUNNER
Beep beep!

PETE (V.O.)
...Pete.

CAMERA moves in, till the moving image on Pete's table fills our FRAME, as WILE E. COYOTE takes off after the Roadrunner in their debut Fast and Furry-ous, under our END CREDITS.

Wile E. paints a fake tunnel on a rock face, watches the Roadrunner run into the tunnel, then SLAMS flat against it himself... he sets up a fake "SCHOOL CROSSING" sign, only to get BLENDERED by the Roadrunner as he blurs past, returning with a sign that says "ROADRUNNERS CAN'T READ"...

As the cartoon and credits near their end, we PULL BACK from the cartoon again...

...to see that it's still "playing" on Pete's sheet of drawing paper. The last image stays there a second, then FADES from the paper, leaving Room 15 still and empty.... and then the room is flooded with LIGHT from the windows... for just a moment, before we

FADE OUT.

