

CANARY IN A COAL MINE

written by
Steven D'Arcangelo

818/679-2144
Darcangelosteve@gmail.com

616 West Olive Ave.
Monrovia CA 91016

EXT. SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY - 1937

The autumn sun sets behind dusty Appalachian mountains.

EXT. SCRANTON - COAL MINE - DAY

Pick axes and shovels sit outside the entrance. Mine cart tracks lead into it. A wooden sign reads: GREYLOCKE COLLIERY

An OLD GEEZER snoozes in a rocking chair. OLD CANARY rests on his shoulder.

TIC TIC TIC

A clock chimes 5:00. Old Canary pecks Geezer to wake him.

OLD GEEZER
Well, paint me red and shoot me
dead. It's...

He pulls a lever on a steam whistle. It SCREECHES.

OLD GEEZER (cont'd)
...quittin' time!

Cones of light slowly emerge from the dark cave. One by one, miners exit. They turn off helmet lamps. Faces are covered in soot. Some men cough. Others discuss the work day.

STOCKY MINER
I told Earl not to strike that seam
but did he listen? Jeez God no.

They carry tiny cages with a canary in each one. The canaries turn off tiny helmet lamps. Beaks covered in soot. Some birds whistle. Others discuss the day.

STOCKY CANARY
Didja hear that sour note Rick
struck after lunch?

CURT CANARY
Hear it? It made my feathers crawl.

In this coal mine, canaries are the stars.

BINOCULARS POV

Miners release canaries into a rectangular, shed-sized AVIARY built of wood and wire. Men and birds part ways.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Cole, we're gonna be late.

INT. AVIARY - SECLUDED PERCH - DAY

COLE COOPER, a child canary with yellow feathers and determined eyes, peers through homemade binoculars.

BOBBY

We're gonna be late, Cole. And we
can't be this near the Wild Zone.

Behind Cole paces BOBBY, an anxious canary of the same age. He wears Coke-bottle glasses and a beanie.

Cole ignores his pal in favor of bird watching.

BINOCULARS POV

More miners exit with a variety of canaries. Orange ones, green ones, short, tall, etc.

There are Spanish Timbrados, German Rollers, Russian Singers. Accents match breeds. Birds and miners are both immigrants.

Some cages are empty. Cole furrows his brow. Curious.

After the last dawdler, Old Geezer closes the mine. Cole stuffs his binoculars in a knapsack. He sees the clock.

COLE

Bobby. We're gonna be late!

He flies off. Bobby rolls his eyes and follows.

INT. AVIARY SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Cole and Bobby soar through the Aviary, a bird version of a coal mine patch town with:

Houses (nest boxes), police precinct (donut box), bank (piggy bank), movie theater (View-Master). You get the idea.

NEWSBIRD, a scrappy canary with a newsboy cap and satchel of papers, waves a *Caged Chronicle*.

NEWSBIRD

Extra, extra! Read all about it!
Experts declare bird in hand worth
two in bush.

Passers-by pass him by without buying newspapers.

BIRD BATH FOUNTAIN

Canaries in shower caps bathe. A shadow falls over them as a BLONDE BOY opens the Aviary to change the dirty water.

BATHING CANARIES

All hail He-Who-Cares-For-Us.

Smiling canaries bow before him, an action that every bird will do upon future mention of "He-Who-Cares-For-Us".

BLONDE BOY

You don't have to call me that.

BATHING CANARIES

All hail He-Who-Cares-For-Us.

He sighs. (*Note: Kids understand the birds. Adults do not.*)

AVIARY MAIN STREET

Cole and Bobby zip by canaries dining on sunflower seeds. They bank past ladybirds having feathers fluffed in a preening parlor. Everyone waves to Cole.

CITIZEN CANARIES

- Good luck, Cole.
- Best of luck, Cole.
- Go get 'em, Cole!

No one waves to Bobby.

BOBBY

I'm auditioning too. How come no one ever notices me?

SMACK!

He flies head first into a window. Birds laugh. A JANITOR slaps a round sticker on the glass. Happens all the time.

COLE

Happy now?

Bobby bobs his head yes.

EXT. GILDED CAGE - CONTINUOUS

The Gilded Cage, a golden dome terrarium with touches of greenery, looms over the community like a castle in the sky.

INT. GILDED CAGE - ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

Cole and Bobby enter an atrium with multi-leveled stages. A rapt audience watches male canary contestants face the --

COUNCIL OF ELDERS

-- who are a trio of canaries sitting on lofty perch swings. Behind them blinks a neon sign for: AVIAN BANDSTAND

Accompanied by a band playing bells and chimes, the contestants whistle for the Elders. One performs bluegrass.

Shivers run through Elder POLLY, a voluptuous ditzy hen with blonde head feathers that don't match her tail feathers.

POLLY

Your voice gave me goosebumps. And
I'm not even a goose. I love you! I
love you! I love you!

Elder SILAS, the Jack Nicholson of canaries, puts Polly in her place with a stern glance.

The Elders confer with each other in whispers. Silas delivers the final judgment to the nervous contestant.

SILAS

Selected.

The audience applauds. Bluegrass canary does a victory dance and steps aside for the next bird who whistles gospel music.

Elder RANDALL, a burly bird in a Cab Calloway zoot suit and fedora with feather in brim, low-fives the contestant.

RANDALL

You blew my wig, bree. Your pipes
are killer-diller and you are in
the groove. Stay snazzy!

Gospel canary looks dumbfounded, like he's trying to decipher what Randall just said. Polly rolls her eyes.

Again the Elders confer and again Silas gives the verdict.

SILAS

Selected.

Gospel canary cries happy tears as others audition.

AT THE END OF THE LINE

Cole gargles with water. Bobby psychs himself up.

BOBBY

Third time's the charm, third
time's the charm.

Bobby steps on stage, faces the Elders, and gazes at the heavenly beauty of Polly. He clutches his heart...

BOBBY (cont'd)

Palpitations, palpitations.

...and faints. Polly blushes. Randall rolls his eyes.

SILAS

Next.

Bobby awakens as production assistants drag him off stage. Cole steps up.

SILAS (cont'd)

You're Cooper's son. Cole, is it?

COLE

Yes, sir.

SILAS

Voice of an angel, your father is.
Let us hear if the apple falls
close to the tree.

Cole closes his eyes, opens his beak, and out comes...

THE MOST HORRIFIC SINGING OF ALL TIME!

A moment later he stops and opens his eyes.

Contestants back away. Elders cover ears. Nails on a chalkboard would've sounded better.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Sadly the apple does not fall close
at all. Rejected.

Cole's crushed. Bobby scratches his head.

BOBBY

So... are we getting apples or not?

INT. COOPER NEST BOX - NIGHT

With Popsicle stick furniture and a HOME TWEET HOME sign, the poky box gives off a cozy vibe. Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" plays on a radio. Framed photos document the family:

- MA and PA COOPER proudly cradle baby Cole.
- Infant Cole plays with Pa while Ma sits on an egg.
- Ma, Pa, toddler Cole, and baby KATIE enjoy Thanksgiving.
- The family, minus Pa, tries to enjoy Independence Day.

KITCHEN

Ma Cooper, now older in appearance and outlook, preps a meal with a weariness that only parents know.

MA COOPER
Kids, supper time.

"Prep" in this case means that Ma devours each food group separately and regurgitates them onto plates (seriously).

She serves bottle cap plates to Cole and Katie. The family of three eats at a table for four. Cole barely eats.

MA COOPER (cont'd)
You're only pecking at your supper,
Cole. Something the matter?

COLE
Just not hungry, is all.

He pushes aside his plate.

MA COOPER
Not everyone passes the audition
their first time. You did your best
and that's what matters. You did do
your best, heyna? Never mind. I
don't want to know. Eat up.

COLE
I just wanted to make Pa proud.

MA COOPER
Keep practicing and you will.

Katie separates her food into military portions.

MA COOPER (cont'd)
Katie, please stop playing with
your food and eat it.

KATIE
I don't like my seeds touchin' my
raisins or my raisins touchin' my
seeds!

MA COOPER

It doesn't matter if they touch
because they all go to the same
place. Now eat up.

Katie pretends to eat but discretely builds a wall between
her basic food groups.

Ma Cooper sits down, ready to enjoy her supper.

COLE

When's Pa coming home?

Ma lowers her food without taking a bite.

KATIE

Pa's coming home?

MA COOPER

Not just yet, Katie darling. Your
father's still working.

COLE

The other canaries come out of the
mines every night. Why not Pa?

MA COOPER

You know he was chosen to work in
Edgemore. It's a great honor.

COLE

Is that why some of the cages come
out empty?

MA COOPER

Yes.

COLE

So if Pa's not in a cage, why
doesn't he just fly out?

MA COOPER

Your Pa is one of the best
songbirds, and the best are all
promoted to Edgemore Mine. You
should be so lucky.

KATIE

What's that mine like?

MA COOPER

There are no cages. No cats.
Canaries sing all day and always in
tune. Bread crumbs are toasted.

(MORE)

MA COOPER (cont'd)
Edgemore is just how the Elders
describe -- perfect.

COLE
But you haven't seen it.

MA COOPER
I don't have to.

COLE
Why?

MA COOPER
Because that's what the Elders say
and they're very wise.

COLE
They also say stay out of the Wild
Zone but --

MA COOPER
Do you have to question everything?
Sometimes in life you don't
question. You accept and move on.
Now eat supper or go to your nest.

She pushes his dish toward him. He eats as if eating poison.

INT. COLE AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cole and Katie lay in bunk nests. Only Katie sleeps.

Cole leafs through a photo album, gazing at pictures of Pa
Cooper teaching him how to build Popsicle stick furniture.
Happier times.

INT. BOBBY'S NEST BOX - NIGHT

Bobby sleeps on pine bedding, a photo of Polly taped to the
ceiling above him. Many photos. His nest is her shrine.

THUMP. Something taps the window. Bobby wakes up. THUMP. He
looks out the window. A pebble bops his head thanks to Cole.

BOBBY
Ow! I don't need another bumble on
my noggin. What are you doing here?

COLE
Let's go. I got a surprise for you.
It's right up your alley.

Bobby gives him a dubious look.

EXT. THE BLACK LUNG - NIGHT

A dive bar in a sketchy part of the Aviary. Scale model trolley tracks lie next to it.

Cole and Bobby watch tipsy canaries stumble out of the saloon. One tries to fly but falls on his face.

BOBBY

When you said up my alley, you didn't say a back alley on the wrong side of the tracks. What are we here for?

COLE

Answers. My Pa... Edgemore...

BOBBY

Aww, not this again. Cole, we can't go into a speakeasy. We're minors.

Cole snags miner helmets from passed-out canaries and plops one on Bobby.

COLE

Exactly.

INT. THE BLACK LUNG - NIGHT

Canary waitresses serve thimbles of foam to canary miners. Miners chatter about work, chirp drinking songs, play darts. Some grab each other's beaks and wrestle. Tough crowd.

BACK BOOTH

SAM, a knockabout red canary with his name on his foreman's helmet, tells a tale in thick Pennsylvanian accent to WELSH CANARY and RUSSIAN CANARY.

SAM

...so I look at 'im and says, "B-Flat major chord? If you don't get off your doopa and back to work, you'll be flat!"

The canaries laugh and drink. Welsh Canary gnaws a chew stick like a cigar. Cole and Bobby approach.

COLE

'scuse me. You Sam? The waitress
said you're foreman at the mine.

SAM

Whichever broad sent you, youse can
tell her I ain't yer pappy.

WELSH CANARY

Aren't you boyos too dwtty to be in
here?

COLE

(deepens his voice)
We just look young, is all.

BOBBY

It's a blessing *and* a curse.

A crusty WAITRESS CANARY serves foamy thimbles to the boys.

WAITRESS CANARY

Couple two-three root beers for ya.

Bobby puffs out his crest toward Welsh Canary.

BOBBY

Mine's on the rocks.

Cole removes his two-sizes-too-big helmet and faces Sam.

COLE

Do you know my Pa? His name is --

SAM

Don't ruffle my feathers, kid. I...
Hold on now. You're Coop's boy,
heyna? Yeah. I know your ol' man.
Good songbird.

RUSSIAN CANARY

Is great songbird.

WELSH CANARY

The best. Iechyd Da to Coop!

SAM/RUSSIAN CANARY

To Coop!

The trio clinks thimbles. Sam clinks Cole's as well.

SAM

Draw up a perch, kid. What d'ya
wanna know?

SAME - LATER

Sam relays a dramatic story about Cole's Pa.

SAM
 ...but Coop didn't hesitate, not even for a second. And that pinch was tight. Full of bats too.

Russian and Welsh Canary recoil at the mention of bats. Bobby lowers his empty thimble, exposing his foam mustache.

BOBBY
 Bats are in the mine? Vampire bats?

SAM
 Hungarian breed. Nasty critters. Didn't matter none to Coop. He flew in and saved me. That's your Pa for ya. Always willin' to lend a wing.

Cole beams with pride.

SAM (cont'd)
 You remind me of him. You got his moxie.

COLE
 Moxie?

SAM
 Gumption. Curiosity.

BOBBY
 Oh, he has that in spades.

COLE
 What's Edgemore like? Ever been?

RUSSIAN CANARY
 Not yet, comrade, but I take vocal lessons. Feathers crossed.

SAM
 We ain't as lucky as your Pa. Wanna know what Edgemore's like? Ask 'em.

Sam points to the back corner where Elders Polly and Randall socialize with locals. Bobby lights up.

BOBBY
 Polly... in the same room as... me? Palpitations. I'm having palpi --

His heart beats faster and he passes out. Sam eyes Bobby's thimble, and then the Waitress.

SAM

That was root beer, heyna?

EXT. MODEL TROLLEY DEPOT - NIGHT

Plastic depot. Toy trees. Waiting on a bench are revelers too tipsy to fly home, including Polly.

RANDALL

You guzzled too much foam to fly,
dutchess. We'll take the "A" train.

Cole and Bobby approach. Bobby quakes nervously. Cole urges him on with a trolley schedule and pen.

BOBBY

Excuse me, Mister Randall. Miss
Pol --

Bobby makes eye contact with Polly. His heart beats faster.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Palpitations. Palpitations.

COLE

What my pal's trying to say is --

RANDALL

He's collaring for an autograph.
I'm hep to that jive. But sorry, no
John Hencocks after bright.

Bobby's crestfallen. Polly recognizes Cole.

POLLY

You auditioned today, heyna?

COLE

Yup. The foreman at the pub said
you've been to Edgemore Mine. How
is it?

Randall's taken aback by this, but he quickly rebounds.

RANDALL

That joint is the hippest frolic
pad around. Hippest riffs. Hippest
drink. Even toasted bread crumbs.
And that's a fact, Jack.

COLE

My name's not Jack. It's Cole. If
the mine's so swell then how come
you didn't stay there like my Pa?

Beat. Randall takes the schedule.

RANDALL

Who do I scribble this to, gate?

BOBBY

Bobby. That's me.

As Randall signs, a miniature electric trolley comes to a
stop.

COLE

Polly, where is Edgemore Mine? Is
it in the Wild Zone?

POLLY

That's one way to put it.

COLE

Where? Everything out there's zoned
off.

RANDALL

And with solid reason. Out there we
fend for ourselves. In here
everything's provided by He-Who-
Cares-For-Us. There's no reason to
cut out of this joint.

POLLY

No reason to go to Edgemore.

RANDALL

You're coming up on the wrong riff,
Polly. Knock your fans a scribble
so we can trilly on out of here.

Polly narrows her eyes at Randall. Her ditzy persona
temporarily vanishes as she signs Bobby's schedule.

Randall pulls her onboard the trolley. It departs, leaving
Cole frustrated and Bobby elated.

BOBBY

I can't believe she gave me her
autograph! That's the cat's meow.
Minus the cat.

Bobby reads the autograph.

BOBBY (cont'd)
 "South of emporium. Wood fence.
 Behind purple stone." What kinda
 autograph is that?

Cole looks at it closely. A crude map accompanies the words.

COLE
 It's not an autograph.

EXT. EMPORIUM - WOODEN FENCE - NIGHT

Cole and Bobby follow the fence, trekking through vegetation with their borrowed helmet lamps illuminating the way. Cole holds the "autograph" like a map. Bobby nervously whispers.

BOBBY
 First a saloon and now this. We're
 gonna get in serious trouble, Cole.

COLE
 If Edgemore's in the Wild Zone, I
 wanna see it. Here's the fence. Now
 to find the stone.

BOBBY
 Is it up the line or down the line?

COLE
 Looks like up the line.

BOBBY
 I don't see it. We been here for
 hours. We should've found it by --

WHAM! He walks beak-first into a --

PURPLE STONE

Large. Smooth. Perfect for skipping. Cole verifies the map.

COLE
 This is it.

Beyond the stone stands the chicken wire wall of the
 Aviary, and, beyond that, the human world -- THE WILD ZONE.
 Signs state: FOR THE SAFETY OF THE FLOCK, DO NOT ENTER.

BOBBY
 There ya are. Wild Zone. Can we go
 home now?

Cole struggles to roll aside the stone. Bobby reluctantly helps, unveiling a small --

HOLE IN THE FENCE

-- created by a corner of the wire that's been curled up. The pals stare into the silent inky blackness. Cole spots something with his lamp -- canary claw prints in the dirt.

COLE

Someone's been out there. Come on.
The outside world is out there!

BOBBY

And we're in here. That's how it works.

COLE

I got you Polly's autograph.

BOBBY

You got me Polly's gibberish.

COLE

Help and I'll get her real
autograph on a one-by-two glossy...

Bobby shakes his head no.

COLE (cont'd)

...showing off her wingspan.

BOBBY

OK, I'll help. But from in here.
I'm not going out there.

COLE

Fine.

Cole flies up to a telephone pole and clips a waxed string.

INT. LADYBIRD NEST BOX - NIGHT

SNOOTY LADYBIRD gossips on her Dixie cup phone.

SNOOTY LADYBIRD

...he slyly asks about the birds
and the bees so I chirp, "Well, I
can't speak for the bees but..."
Hello? Angie? Hello?

BACK TO COLE AND BOBBY

Cole ties one end of the string around him and the other end around Bobby. He tugs at it.

COLE

Lay low. Tug if someone sees us.

Cole squeezes through the hole. An owl hoot scares him, freezing him in place. Bobby gives off a sarcastic look.

BOBBY

You're heading out tonight, heyna?

Cole puffs out his crest and continues on, trailing the string behind him like an astronaut exploring space.

EXT. WILD ZONE - NIGHT TO MORNING

MONTAGE - COLE TRACKS CLAW PRINTS THROUGH WOODS

-- Acorns drop like bombs. One bounces off his helmet.

-- Mysterious eyes stare at him, but he presses on.

-- The sun rises over the Appalachians. Cole gazes in awe.

-- The prints bring him to a grassy mound overlooking the:

EXT. COLLIERY - MORNING

Cole pulls out binoculars. When last he spied on the mine, he could only see the entrance. Now he sees everything.

BINOCULARS POV

The colliery consists of the mine and its structures: supply shed, business office, wash house. The BREAKER, a multi-story coal processing plant, looms over all like Mount Doom.

COLE GLANCES BACK AT THE AVIARY

He's trekked far for a bird, but for humans it's only been 40 feet.

BACK TO BINOCULARS POV

The claw prints continue past grazing geese and end at the hillside of the mine. A small air shaft juts out the side.

COLE (O.S.)

An air shaft? Who cares?!

Something dark obscures his POV.

SLASH!

A huge paw lunges at Cole and knocks off his helmet. The paw belongs to NICODEMUS, a sneering cat with jeweled collar.

Panicked, Cole flies into a thorny bramble bush, avoiding being cut thanks to his minuscule size.

The monstrous cat tries to get inside the cage-like bush, but thorns cut him. He prowls back and forth. Unable to break in.

COLE

Not so tough now, are ya?

He flies to an opening at the end of the bush. His string gets caught on thorns, yanking his knapsack over his head!

INT. AVIARY - PURPLE STONE - CONTINUOUS

Bobby, snoring by the fence, gets yanked awake by the taut string around his waist. He latches onto the fence wire to keep from being sucked through the fence hole.

BOBBY

Stupid Cole and his stupid moxie!

EXT. COLLIERY - CONTINUOUS

Cole rips the knapsack to see out of one eye. Anchored by thorns, he pivots side to side kite-like to avoid cat claws.

Cole pulls off the sack, relieved, until the cat snatches his flight feathers. He's dragged toward the feline's gaping maw, close enough to feel whiskers. Terror washes over him.

WHACK!

The cat falls backward, decked by a broom.

CHARLIE

Bad cat, Nicodemus. Bad cat! Shoo.

Nicodemus scrapes the boy's arm. Charlie decks the cat again, causing him to free Cole. Nicodemus runs to the office porch.

INT. AVIARY - PURPLE STONE - CONTINUOUS

The string loosens around Bobby and he drops to the ground.

EXT. COLLIERY - CONTINUOUS

Ten-year-old CHARLIE HAGAN, the blonde boy from earlier, sports hand-me-down dungarees and a carefree demeanor. His scruffy hair matches Cole's scruffy feathers.

CHARLIE
You alright, li'l guy?

Cole tries to fly, but crashes like Woodstock. He plucks out his damaged flight feathers.

COLE
Can't fly till these grow back, but
I'll live. Thanks, He-Who-Cares-
For-Us.

CHARLIE
Call me Charlie.

COLE
I'm Cole.

CHARLIE
Hey, put our names together you get
Char-Cole! You know, like charcoal.

Cole nods. Awkward silence ensues. Neither knows what to say. Beat. Charlie pulls licorice from his pocket.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Want some? I like red, but I keep
tryin' to eat black 'cause my Pop
says it's swell.

He bravely tries a black strand. Yuck. He offers both colors to Cole. Cole tastes the red. Yuck. He tries the black. Yum.

MR. GREYLOCKE (O.S.)
Charlie! What am I paying you for?
Chores or breaks?

MR. GREYLOCKE, all business in suit and attitude, exits the corrugated office, followed by a hissing Nicodemus.

CHARLIE
Be right there, Mister Greylocke.
Gotta go, li'l Cole. See you later.

He scoops up Cole and runs him 40 feet to the Aviary.

COLE
No, wait! I don't wanna go back --

Charlie places him at the fence hole and returns to work.

COLE (cont'd)
-- to the Aviary.

Bobby impatiently waits by the purple stone.

BOBBY
Soooo about that one-by-two glossy.

INT. GILDED CAGE - DAY

Cole rings the doorbell. Partying can be heard inside.

COLE
I'll handle the chatter. You'll
just palpitate.

BOBBY
Me?! No. I won't palpi --

Polly opens the door. She's bleary-eyed and half asleep. All Bobby sees, however, are her gams in an Esther Williams swimsuit. He promptly faints.

COLE
We followed your directions.

She rubs her temples in pain. Gives him a puzzled look.

COLE (cont'd)
Directions. That you gave us last
night. Didn't find anything though.

POLLY
I dunno what you're chirping about,
but you don't hafta shout it.

He didn't. He shows her the "autographed" trolley schedule. She suddenly remembers. And regrets.

COLE
Those your claw prints in the Wild?

POLLY
You went into the Wild Zone?!

She glances at a bird bath party behind her to ensure no one overhears. Randall does a belly flop. She whispers to Cole.

POLLY (cont'd)
You shouldn't have done that.

SILAS (O.S.)
Shouldn't have done what?

Silas stealthily, eerily appears behind her. Bobby awakens.

POLLY
Um, shouldn't have come here to
audition again. I'm sorry, kids,
but all decisions are final.

SILAS
Ahh, Cooper's son. I'm afraid Polly
is correct. But no need to fret.
You can audition again next week.

COLE
I'm not here to audition. I'm here
to --

POLLY
Get an autograph! Right, sugar?

	COLE		BOBBY
No.		Yes!	

SILAS
Celebrity signatures. How quaint.
Yes, I will grant you an autograph
if you so desire.

BOBBY
Actually, I want to get Pol --

Silas takes the schedule. Looks for a spot to sign on front.
Polly sees her clue written on the back. Safe from his eyes.

SILAS
No room here. Perhaps on the back.

He flips the schedule over, panicking Polly. She nabs it.

POLLY
We can do better than a trolley
schedule for true fans, can't we?

She snaps her finger feathers. A female BANDSTAND ASSISTANT
appears with a stack of glossies. Polly looks glamorous in
her picture. Silas looks annoyed in his.

While Silas signs his glossy, Polly flings the schedule at a
trash barrel behind her. Unbeknownst to her, she misses.

COLE
 Silas, when will my Pa be done
 working Edgemore Mine?

Polly, about to sign her glossy, stops to hear Silas' reply.

SILAS
 Your Pa will work as long as he
 needs to and not a moment more.

Cole seems happy. And then forlorn. Muddled. He doesn't know how to take Silas' answer. Polly angrily signs the glossy.

Meanwhile the cute Assistant winks at Bobby. He doesn't know how to react. Polly and Silas hand their autographs to him.

SILAS (cont'd)
 Now if you'll excuse us, we have a
 social to attend. Good day.

COLE
 But you didn't really answer my --

Silas slams the door shut. Cole sighs.

COLE (cont'd)
 At least you got your autograph.

Bobby throws out Silas' autograph, but eagerly reads Polly's. Beat. He flings it to Cole.

BOBBY
 No, I didn't. It's for you again.

He flies off in a huff. Cole checks out the glossy.

INSERT - THE GLOSSY, which reads:

"White tree P plus R."

BACK TO COLE

He scratches his head. Curiouser and curiouser...

INT. GILDED CAGE - DAY

Through a veiled window, Polly anxiously watches Cole leave.

SILAS
 They just came by for autographs?
 Nothing else?

POLLY

They're fans. What else is there?

She returns to the party. Silas turns to follow when he notices the schedule on the floor. He picks it up.

INSERT - THE TROLLEY SCHEDULE, which reads:

"South of emporium. Wood fence.
Behind purple stone."

BACK TO SILAS

He eyes Polly suspiciously.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - MORNING

In a red shoebox school a strict SCHOOLMARM patrols her class, correcting students who practice the musical scale.

Bobby holds the "Fa" note well. Until Cole kicks his match-box desk. He sits in the desk behind Bobby. They whisper.

COLE

We gotta go back into the Wild.

BOBBY

No, we don't.

COLE

I'll go back in, but I can't fly this time. You just have to be by the stone in case of emergencies.

BOBBY

Emergencies like that cat almost killing you? I'll be saving your life by saying no.

Schoolmarm glares at them. They resume singing.

COLE/BOBBY

"Doe, Re, Me..."

Cole sings off-key. Badly. Schoolmarm corrects him and moves on. The pals return to whispering.

COLE

Aren't you curious to know what Polly meant by "white tree P plus R"?

BOBBY

No. And if you weren't curious, I'd have an autograph from her that's actually for me.

COLE

Applesauce! If I weren't curious, you never would've met her. Are you a canary or a chicken?

Schoolmarm passes, staring daggers through them. They sing.

COLE/BOBBY

"So, La, Te..."

Schoolmarm moves on. Bobby puffs out his macho crest.

BOBBY

I'm a canary. A canary happy with the way things were, but you can't leave well enough alone, can you?

COLE

Sure, I can.

BOBBY

So if I say no, you won't go into the Wild by yourself? You'll forget all this and move on?

COLE

Absolutely.

BOBBY

Wonderful. Then my answer is...

EXT. WILD ZONE - WOODS - MORNING

Cole tracks the claw prints through underbrush, alone and without a lifeline. He grumbles.

COLE

Stupid Bobby and his stupid answer.

Wearing aluminum foil armor, Cole brandishes a nail and pocket watch cover like a sword and shield.

SNAP.

He spins and slashes his sword, scaring a plump cricket who stepped on a twig. The bug nervously puts it back together.

COLE (cont'd)

Sorry.

EXT. COLLIERY - DAY

BINOCULARS POV

A white tree sheds its leaves alongside the mine. Cole pans the POV past geese and over to the --

BUSINESS OFFICE

The cat licks himself on the porch. He stops. Sniffs. Scans.

COLE (O.S.)

Aww applesauce.

The cat slinks toward Cole's POV when a spot of light blinds him. The spot bounces around, drawing Nicodemus' attention.

BACK TO COLE

He angles his metal shield to reflect sunlight at Nicodemus, zigzagging the light like a laser pointer. The cat chases it. Cole darts across the yard.

COLE

Dumb cat.

Dark clouds roll across the sun. The spot of light fades. No longer distracted, Nicodemus sees Cole. Cole sprints to the --

SIDE OF COAL MINE

Cole dives behind the white birch tree. Safe. He inspects it, not knowing what to look for.

He notices another birch nearby. And another. And a few more. Inspections yield nothing.

COLE (cont'd)

This is a wild goose chase.

A goose honks.

COLE (cont'd)

No offense.

VREEEEEEEEEWWW!!

An emergency siren goes off. Cole follows it to the --

COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Miners stumble out violently coughing, including Miner Foreman. Old Geezer and Old Canary help them.

MINER FOREMAN

It's Blackdamp... everyone out.

OLD GEEZER

You're luckier than a rabbit's foot
you made it out.

MINER FOREMAN

...have this fella... to thank.

He hands his bird cage to Geezer. Within the cage lays --

SAM

-- the canary foreman from the bar, encircled by wispy tendrils of black translucent gas. It dissipates.

Helmet lamp off. Eyes shut. Sam breathes shallow breaths. And then he breathes none. A red feather drifts to the ground.

An updraft lifts Sam's feather. Cole's eyes follow it wafting by a CROOKED BIRCH atop the hill. Carved into the tree: P+R

Cole's eyes widen in shock. Rain begins to fall.

HILLTOP OF COAL MINE - MOMENTS LATER

Cole drops his shield to better scramble toward the --

CROOKED BIRCH TREE

He studies the P+R contained within a carved heart. A Cupid arrow aims toward the --

HILLTOP - BACKSIDE

A shadowy abyss due to rumbling rain clouds. Cole quivers.

CRACK!

Lightning strikes, illuminating the abyss to expose a --

MINIATURE GRAVEYARD

Tiny helmets hang on tiny crosses. Dozens of them. Various colored feathers drift across small mounds of dirt.

Cole opens his beak to scream but nothing comes out.

CRACK!!

Lightning strikes again, illuminating a copper sign for:

EDGEMORE

COLE

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

SERIES OF SHOTS - COLE FLEES, SCREAMING ALL THE WAY

-- He drops his sword and sprints past Old Geezer.

-- He speeds through the woods and scares the cricket again.

-- He squeezes through the Aviary hole and seals it shut.

INT. AVIARY - AVIARY SQUARE - AFTERNOON

Newsbird waves a *Caged Chronicle*, trying to lure customers.

NEWSBIRD

Extra, extra! Read all about it!
Birds of feather flock together.

No customers are lured.

Water-logged Cole stumbles through the dry crowd, pulling his armor off. A distant bell rings. He dashes toward it.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - AFTERNOON

An alarm clock on top of the school rings. Students exit. Bobby licks a Jawbreaker bigger than his head. Cole tackles him, bumping the candy to the ground.

BOBBY

That was from Misses Finch for
hitting the high notes! Why are you
soppin' wet?

Bobby cleans off the candy and sucks on it.

COLE

They're dead! It's all fake!

BOBBY

Who's dead? Did you go into the Wild again?! I knew you couldn't leave well enough alone.

COLE

Edgemore Mine is a sham!

BOBBY

You found Edgemore?! That's the cat's pajamas. Minus the cat. What's it like?

COLE

It ain't real! Well, it is real, but it ain't what you think.

BOBBY

The bread crumbs aren't toasted?

Cole grabs Bobby by the shoulders, again bumping the Jawbreaker to the ground.

COLE

Edgemore is a graveyard! It's full of dead canaries!

BOBBY

What the heck you chirping about?

COLE

I saw Sam from the pub. He's dead! The humans must've rubbed him out.

BOBBY

The humans love our singing. They'd never hurt us.

COLE

We're not safe. No one's safe! Shake a leg. We gotta spread word!

Bobby fans his tail feathers in avian anger.

BOBBY

No more immature adventures, Cole. It's time to grow up. Time to be an adult. Now if you'll excuse me, I hafta go buy a new Jawbreaker.

COLE

But --

BOBBY

You want someone to listen? Tell
someone who cares!

INT. TELEPHONE COMPANY - AFTERNOON

Gum-chomping switchboard operators connect calls. Instead of phone plugs and circuit cords, they use paper cups and waxed string. Ma Cooper talks into a clunky headset.

MA COOPER

How may I connect your call? ...
One moment please.

She connects the call.

A glass window frames Cole. He tries to fly toward her, but stumbles. His fragmented feathers give him air until --

SMACK!

He flies head first into the glass. The janitor slaps a round sticker on it. Happens all the time.

Cole rubs his head and enters through the door.

COLE

Ma, Ma! I gotta tell you something!

MA COOPER

Cole, what are you doing here?

COLE

I gotta tell you something big!

MA COOPER

Whatever it is, it can wait till I
get home. I'm working.

COLE

I went into the Wild Zone!!

Operators stop chewing gum and stare at Ma, as does their roller-skating boss. Beat.

MA COOPER

I think I'll take my break now.

EXT. TELEPHONE COMPANY - A MINUTE LATER

COLE

Yeah, I went into the Wild, but
that's not important.

Ma moves her son away from co-workers on break. The workers
gnaw chew sticks like cigarettes.

MA COOPER

I'd call trespassing pretty
important, Cole.

COLE

I had to find out the truth.

MA COOPER

You lied to me.

COLE

I'm sorry, but I --

MA COOPER

To think I believed you gave up
this malarkey. You're grounded.

COLE

Ground me, scold me, send me to
nest without dessert. Just believe
me.

MA COOPER

Believe humans are out to kill us?
Then why bother taking care of us?
If you're going to lie, at least
make it plausible.

COLE

I'm not lying. I saw a graveyard.

MA COOPER

For the sake of argument, let's say
you did. What then, huh? What would
you have me do about it?

COLE

I don't know. You're the adult.
Warn the flock, I guess. Use your
switchboard!

MA COOPER

No. If the Elders learn you broke
the law, we'll both be in trouble.

COLE

Fine, I'll be the adult!

He storms off mad.

MA COOPER

Don't you turn away when I'm
chirping to you, mister!

(rubs her eyes)

I swear that boy is going to drive
me to chew.

One of the co-workers offers her a chew stick.

INT. THE BLACK LUNG - LATE AFTERNOON

WELSH CANARY

Iechyd Da to Sam! For being
promoted to Edgemore before us.

RUSSIAN CANARY

To Sam!

Welsh Canary and Russian Canary chug thimbles and slam them
down next to empties. The Russian burps. Cole fans the odor.

RUSSIAN CANARY (cont'd)

Lucky son-of-gun to shuffle off.

COLE

He's not lucky. That's what I'm
trying to tell you.

WELSH CANARY

We continue to sing and our journey
shall come to an end too, butty.

RUSSIAN CANARY

Da, we move on to better place.

WELSH CANARY

Get our just reward.

RUSSIAN CANARY

Join the choir invisible.

Cole stares at them in disbelief.

COLE

I... think you're missing the point
of those phrases. Trust me, you
don't want to go there.

WELSH CANARY
Bread crumbs not toasted?

COLE
Forget the bread crumbs! If you go
to Edgemore, you'll die like Sam.

RUSSIAN CANARY
We dying to go there. To Sam!

WELSH CANARY
To Sam!

They down more drinks. Cole sighs.

EXT. GILDED CAGE - ATRIUM - LATE AFTERNOON

Crew members rig flashlight spotlights while Elders rehearse critiques. The Bandstand Assistant fills in for contestants.

RANDALL
Your voice is so smooth, it's like
butter. No, like velvet. No, like
silk! Your voice is like silk.

The Assistant blushes.

SILAS
Congratulations on making my ears
bleed. Hmmm, said that last week.
My condolences on the death of your
voice. Hmm, week before.

The Assistant cries.

CRAFT SERVICES TABLE

Polly watches her fellow Elders, shaking her head. She reaches for a snack. Cole surprises her with one.

POLLY
You shouldn't be here.

COLE
I saw the graveyard. You carved the
heart, heyna? P is for Polly. Who's
R for?

Off to the side, Randall flirts with Bandstand Assistant.

RANDALL
Your voice really is like silk.

Assistant blushes. Melancholy Polly watches. Cole notices.

COLE

You and Randall... are lovebirds?!

POLLY

A long time ago. Before his
feathers showed their true colors.
You have to go now.

COLE

No. What is it with you adults? My
Ma. You. We gotta warn the flock.

He jumps in front of the Assistant to face the Elders.

COLE (cont'd)

Cancel the ceremony! Don't send
anyone else into the mines.

POLLY

Ignore him. He doesn't know what
he's chirping about.

COLE

The humans are lying to us about
Edgemore. They're killing us!

SILAS

Those are very serious allegations.
Can you back them up?

COLE

I saw a graveyard. Humans bury
canaries there after murdering
them.

RANDALL

Murder? How?

COLE

I dunno. Booby traps. Electric
chair. Maybe guillotines!

RANDALL

Guillotines. In a cave? You're
muggin' heavy now, Jack.

COLE

I dunno why you keep calling me
Jack, but this is serious.

SILAS

Yes, thank you for bringing it to our attention. We will look into it. Now please leave so that we may continue our rehearsal.

COLE

You're not listening! No more rehearsals. No more nothing!

Cole shuts off lights. He pushes Assistant toward the door.

BANDSTAND ASSISTANT

I'm not supposed to be here today.
I'm just covering someone's shift.

Silas blocks the door, casting a shadow over Cole.

SILAS

I think you are sorely mistaken in this matter.

COLE

I'm not! I swear.

SILAS

You must be. Because the only way to see an alleged graveyard at the mine is to enter the Wild Zone, which is illegal and punishable. However, you strike me as too intelligent to break the law. Am I incorrect in that assumption?

Cole glances to Polly. She avoids eye contact. He turns to Silas and solemnly shakes his head no.

SILAS (cont'd)

I did not think so. Randall, please escort Mister Cooper out.

Randall obliges. Polly and Silas remain behind.

POLLY

Kids these days. Such active imaginations.

SILAS

Yes. That must be it.

They return to rehearsal, leaving the Assistant bewildered.

BANDSTAND ASSISTANT

Last time I cover someone's shift.

EXT. AVIARY SQUARE - LATE AFTERNOON

Cole slumps down onto a bench as canaries go about their day. Some flirt. Others goof off. It's gloomy outside the Aviary, but you wouldn't know it from the happy tone inside.

Cole sighs, longing for their blissful ignorance. He sags deeper in his seat. Deflated.

THUNK

A businessbird drops a newspaper in the trash. Cole sees it.

INSERT - THE NEWSPAPER SLOGAN, which reads:

"The Caged Chronicle: Nothing is
more valuable than the truth."

INT. CAGED CHRONICLE - NEWSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Hanging on walls are watches marked by different time zones like GILDED CAGE and TROLLEY DEPOT, but set to the same time. Framed headlines include: BIRD BATH RENAMED BATH! and BREAKING NEWS -- EARLY BIRD GETS WORM!

Visor-wearing canaries dip their beaks in ink and peck at blank pages in unison, effectively printing newspapers.

Cole bursts in.

COLE
Stop the presses!

The canaries stop. Relieved. One wipes ink off his beak.

PRINTER CANARY
Thanks. I was getting a headache.

EXT. AVIARY SQUARE - EVENING

Newsbird holds up newspapers with the headline: HUMANS KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE, AND THEN SOME!!

NEWSBIRD
Extra, extra! Read all about it!
Edgemore Mine fake. Humans
slaughter canaries. No one safe.

Citizens buy up the papers for once. Newsbird smiles. Bandstand Assistant grabs one and soars skyward.

INT. GILDED CAGE - EVENING

Silas' finger feathers impatiently drum the balcony railing as fear sweeps through the flock below. The Assistant lands on the balcony.

BANDSTAND ASSISTANT

They're selling like hotcakes, sir.
I was lucky to get a --

Silas snags the paper and reads the article. It's accompanied by a photo of Cole grinning. He thrusts the paper at Polly.

SILAS

Active imagination indeed. This is
a publicity nightmare.

From his pocket he pulls out the trolley schedule with BEHIND PURPLE STONE written on it.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Randall. Come with me.

They march off, leaving the hens alone.

BANDSTAND ASSISTANT

He can be a real pill.

POLLY

And how.

EXT. AVIARY SQUARE - EVENING

Gathered by the fountain, the flock pores through the article. They comfort each other like it's doomsday.

SILAS (O.S.)

Citizens, please calm down.

Silas descends from the Gilded Cage, as if from mini-Mount Olympus. Polly follows, but not Randall.

CITIZEN CANARIES

- I can't believe Silas is here.
- He never leaves the Gilded Cage.
- If anyone can save us, he can.

Silas lands on the top steps of Aviary Hall. Not as high as his usual perch, but higher than everyone else.

SILAS

There is no need to panic. The news of Edgemore Mine being fake is fake itself.

RUSSIAN CANARY

And what of the canary graveyard?

WELSH CANARY

Aye, and the human butchers.

SILAS

Surely none of you believe any of this nonsense. Do you?

A shadow falls over the mob as Charlie opens the Aviary. He innocently leans in to change the fountain water.

The birds panic in a frenzy. Charlie locks the Aviary and runs away. Silas sighs. He clicks his tongue against his beak to command attention.

SILAS (cont'd)

He-Who-Cares-For-Us is not out to kill us. No humans are. This is merely a joke. Not a funny one, but a joke nonetheless, played by an odd bird craving attention.

The flock calms down. They believe Silas.

CLICK CLICK

Cole makes his way through the mob, clicking tongue against beak to steal attention.

COLE

I get plenty of attention. None of it good, but plenty.

A fast-talking REPORTER BIRD flashes her press pass.

REPORTER BIRD

Heron Johnson, Caged Chronicle. How will all this affect tomorrow's selection ceremony?

SILAS

The ceremony will proceed as normal.

COLE

Cancel it. Nobody else can go into
the mines. It's suicide! No, worse.
It's genocide!!

The mob flips out. Schoolmarm proudly says to Reporter Bird:

SCHOOLMARM

I taught him that word.

Polly watches the birds frenzy up again. Out of control.

CLICK CLICK CLICK

Silas clicks his beak louder than Cole. Everyone shuts up.

SILAS

Enough! Have you so soon forgotten
Oriole Welles and his radio hoax?

The flock nods in shame. Some glance to --

KRBS HAM RADIO STATION

A *War of the Worlds*-like poster hangs outside the station.
Showcasing felines instead of Martians, it's entitled:
THE CAT THAT ATE THE CANARY!

A portly oriole bird leans against the poster eating peas.

ORIOLE WELLES

For the last time, it was not a
hoax. It was a dramatic
performance. Do not blame me for
the depths of your ignorance if you
fell for it. Er, I mean -- if you
believed it.

Canaries hurl garbage at Welles.

BACK TO SILAS

SILAS

That "performance" caused mass
hysteria and so has this. Do not
let yourselves be duped again.

Birds drop newspapers and sway toward Silas. Then comes...

THE MOST HORRIFIC SINGING OF ALL TIME!

Cole cheeps so loudly and badly that glass windows crack.
Reporter Bird says to Schoolmarm:

REPORTER BIRD

Did you teach him that too?

Schoolmarm shakes her head no.

COLE

I can prove I'm on the up and up.
I'll show you all the entrance to
the Wild Zone!

Silas grows worried as Cole wins everyone over.

Randall arrives, out of breath, and nods to Silas. Only Polly notices. Silas' worry disappears.

SILAS

Please. By all means. Indulge us.

EXT. PURPLE STONE - EVENING

The smooth stone glints in the sun. Cole approaches with the flock. He rolls aside the stone and faces his people.

COLE

Ta-da! Passage to the Wild.

He exudes confidence, until he notices the flock's elation shift to skepticism. He turns to see what they see --

The Aviary's chicken wire has been bent back into shape, sealing up the corner hole like it never existed.

Cole inspects the wire. He tries to bend it back but can't.

SILAS

Are you sure you don't mean another
purple stone in another Aviary?

Canaries laugh. Schoolmarm turns up her nose.

Cole spots a feather beyond the wire. It matches Randall's fedora.

COLE

That's your feather. You closed the
hole!

Randall heeds the feather missing from his hat.

RANDALL

I nixed no such thing, Jack, so
don't play my sky piece cut rate.

COLE
Stop calling me Jack!

RANDALL
Stop laying your racket on -- OW!

Randall reacts to having a feather plucked by Silas, who pretends to find it on the ground.

SILAS
Here is the feather to Randall's "sky piece". It must have fallen in all the excitement. Sorry to interrupt, Cole. You were saying?

Cole's silent. Until he spots Bobby sucking on a new Jawbreaker.

COLE
Bobby, you were with me! You moved the stone and helped me through the hole! Tell them.

SILAS
Robert, is it true you helped your friend through a hole that does not exist? Or perhaps it did exist and you closed it to hide your infractions. Maybe you bravely explored the Wild Zone with Cole.

All eyes on Bobby, including those of an Irish Canary Cop.

BOBBY
Me brave? I'm not a canary. I'm a chicken.

Bobby breaks eye contact with Cole, who is crushed.

SILAS
Now if you are done trying to hoodwink us, Cole, we would like to return to our lives.
(to the flock)
On with the ceremony!

The flock cheers. Silas smirks at Cole.

SILAS (cont'd)
I weep for your future.

He leads everyone away, last of whom are Randall and Polly.

COLE

Why let me learn the truth, Polly,
and then do nothing about it?

POLLY

It's not as simple as you think.

COLE

I don't know what's worse --
denying the truth like my Ma or
ignoring it like you.

RANDALL

Polly, it's time to trilly.

She lowers her head and conforms. Cole watches. Disgusted.

COLE

Now I know what's worse.

Shamefully, she follows Randall. Cole stays behind. He and:

ORIOLE WELLES

Welcome to the club, fellow pariah.

Welles gives him a pea. Cole sniffs it. Dumps it in the
trash.

INT. TELEPHONE COMPANY - EVENING

Ma Cooper speaks into her headset.

MA COOPER

How may I connect your call? ...
One moment please.

She connects and unplugs as the parties converse. She
connects a second call and begins to unplug when --

SNOOTY LADYBIRD (V.O.)

Can you believe that boy Cole?
Riling everyone up like that about
Edgemore being bogus.

HAUGHTY LADYBIRD (V.O.)

And trying to get the Elders to
call off the ceremony. Disgraceful.

Ma's stunned. More calls come in. She eavesdrops.

LADYBIRDS (V.O.)

- It comes from bad parenting.
- Blame the mother.

(MORE)

LADYBIRDS (V.O.) (cont'd)
 - Have you seen her plumage lately?
 - Rumor has it she's moulting.

Ma pins her eyes in anger.

INT. COOPER NEST BOX - NIGHT

Cole enters. Ma Cooper startles him from behind.

MA COOPER
 Anything you care to share about
 your day, Cole?

COLE
 Not really.

MA COOPER
 Nothing?

COLE
 Nope.

MA COOPER
 Then sit down. Time for supper.

Ma serves live food for her and Katie. Cole's plate only contains a sliver of soap.

COLE
 What's this?

Ma whips out the newspaper with Cole's picture.

MA COOPER
 What's *this*?

COLE
 The truth.

MA COOPER
 No, it's not. I heard the truth at
 work.

The cup phone rings. Katie steps on a stool to reach it.

MA COOPER (cont'd)
 And from everyone who's called. Let
 it ring, Katie.

KATIE
 The cup's been ringing off the
 hook, Cole. Everyone hates you!

MA COOPER

They hate us too. Since only lies
come from your beak, you get to
wash it out with soap. Bon appétit.

COLE

But I --

MA COOPER

Sit in the corner, face the wall,
and think about what you've done.

Cole puts the soap in his beak. He chokes. Bubbles waft out.

MA COOPER (cont'd)

What's the matter? Did it go down
the wrong pipe? Here, drink this.

She jerks the soap away and gives him a bottle. He drinks
from it and winces. He reads the label: CASTOR OIL

COLE

You're gonna ground me for telling
the truth?

MA COOPER

Ground you, scold you, send you to
nest without dessert.

She grins. Katie separates her supper.

KATIE

Bad worms! Stop touchin' my grubs.
Youse grubs stop touchin' my worms!

MA COOPER

They all go to the same place,
Katie. Eat 'em.

Katie seems confounded. Like a kid questioning Santa's
existence for the first time.

KATIE

If all food goes the same place,
how can it go down the wrong pipe?

Busted. Cole grins.

COLE

Yeah, Ma, how?

MA COOPER

You think all this questioning is
good?

(MORE)

MA COOPER (cont'd)
 You think it's great your sister's
 doing it too? It's not great. All
 it gets you is trouble.

COLE
 And answers.

MA COOPER
 Name one.

COLE
 I think I --

He stops himself, not wanting to hurt her.

MA COOPER
 Never mind. I don't want to know.
 Your Pa and me raised you to be
 better than this. Keep it up and
 he'll never be proud of you. If he
 was here, he'd --

Cole loses it.

COLE
 Where is he? Where is Pa?! I think
 I know. And I think you do too.

Ma practically ages in front of her kids. Cole pulls his
 laundry off of a drying rack.

KATIE
 Where you goin', Cole?

COLE
 Anywhere but here.

He storms out. Ma slumps into her seat. Emotionally drained.
 The cup phone rings. Katie goes to answer it, but stops.

MA COOPER
 You can answer it.

EXT. MODEL TROLLEY DEPOT - MORNING

The electric trolley moves past the depot, chased by Cole.
 He lobs his hobo bindle into it and jumps aboard.

INT. MODEL TROLLEY - CONTINUOUS

Cole catches his breath. HOBO CANARIES sit across from him.

COLE

I'm running away. I'm gonna ride
the rails whichever direction they
take me. Freedom of the trolley!

The Hobos exchange a glance.

TALL HOBO CANARY

Son, these rails ain't got but one
direction.

SHORT HOBO CANARY

Left.

INT. AVIARY - PERIMETER - CONTINUOUS

With a bored conductor, the toy trolley speeds left around
the looped track. Twice.

EXT. MODEL TROLLEY DEPOT - CONTINUOUS

The trolley stops where Cole boarded. He exits. Hobos laugh.

EXT. AVIARY SQUARE - DAY

The square empties out as citizens pass Cole on their way to
the Gilded Cage. The neon Avian Bandstand sign lights up.

CITIZEN CANARIES

- This week's ceremony will be fun.
- I hope my favorite gets selected.
- Lucky duck if he does.

Cole shakes his head. He sits at the base of the --

BIRD BATH FOUNTAIN

His stomach growls. In the trash he sees the pea that Welles
gave him. Cole wipes dirt off of it. Takes a bite. Ewww.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

That taste bad? Try some new ones.

Charlie leans into the Aviary with fresh peas. Frightened,
Cole hops around, trying to take off, but can't.

CHARLIE

Still can't fly, eh?

Cole twirls his sack of clothes like a rock sling.

COLE

Stay away or I'll slug you!

CHARLIE

Huh? It's me, Charlie. We're pals,
remember? Char-Cole.

He moves closer. Cole releases his sling. The sack bops the boy, does no damage, and falls apart. Clothes hit the floor.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

What's the matter with you birds
lately? You used to love my visits
and bow to me. Not that you had to.
But now you're all loony.

COLE

Sorry if we don't cotton well to
learning He-Who-Cares-For-Us is
really He-Who-Kills-Us!

CHARLIE

He-Who-What?! Does this look like
I'm out to kill you?

He offers black licorice. Cole sniffs it. He gobbles it.

COLE

Maybe not you you, but you humans
in general.

CHARLIE

What are you yapping about?

COLE

Don't take me for a maroon. I know
what your kind does to my kind in
the mines. I know we don't all come
out alive.

CHARLIE

You fellas are brave to go in.

Cole gathers his clothes. Charlie picks up polka dot PJs.
Cole yanks them away.

COLE

Nothing's brave about going into a
mine you're told has guaranteed
safety and toasted bread crumbs.

CHARLIE

I don't know what mine *that* is, but it still takes courage to risk your lives for the men.

COLE

We don't think we're risking anything. We send the best songbirds in for the miners' entertainment and they thank us with cold-blooded murder!

CHARLIE

Wait. You really don't know?

Cole shakes his head no. Charlie's taken aback.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Come with me. I'm not gonna hurt you. Scout's honor.

He does a Cub Scout salute. Cole ponders, then hops on the boy.

COLE

OK, but if you try anything funny I'll slug you again!

EXT. COLLIERY - SIDE OF COAL MINE - CONTINUOUS

Charlie has Cole lean toward the air shaft and listen to the sounds of a working mine: pick-axes chipping rock, coal dropping into carts, canaries squawking tunes, etc.

CHARLIE

It don't matter if you're a soprano or tone deaf. What the miners care about most is you keep singing. Or else they're in danger.

COLE

How so?

CHARLIE

Poison gas. Carbon monoxide I think. Or carbon dioxide. Some kinda carbon that's bad for you. They call it Blackdamp.

He does chores around the colliery while giving Cole a tour.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Us humans can't feel it 'til it's too late, but canaries feel it before us. Long as you keep singing, all's good. But when you stop singing, it's because --

COLE

We're dying from Blackdamp.

CHARLIE

And the miners get out of the tunnels before they die too.

Charlie opens a mailbox and pulls out the day's mail.

EXT. BUSINESS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Charlie sets mail on the porch. Cole leaps to his shoulder.

COLE

So we're just a warning system?!
That's why they take us down there?

CHARLIE

Yeah. I guess. But I thought you all volunteered to go.

COLE

I can't believe I was so eager to audition. If it weren't for me not being able to hold a tune worth a lick, I might be a goner.

CHARLIE

The miners like your music too.
Especially the jazz tunes.

COLE

I still wouldn't go in there. Are all mines like this?

CHARLIE

I think so.

Charlie gestures to the --

BUSINESS OFFICE - WINDOW

Mr. Greylocke barks into his phone.

MR. GREYLOCKE

We didn't become the top Bituminous coal mine in the region by being nice! You want nice? Go down the line to Ashland.

Greylocke pets Nicodemus. His Secretary brings him coffee.

BACK TO CHARLIE AND COLE

CHARLIE

Mister Greylocke is the big cheese. He owns the mine. My Pop says he owns a bunch of 'em.

Nicodemus hungrily eyes Cole. Cole sticks out his tongue.

COLE

Your Pop's a miner?

CHARLIE

Sunrise to sundown, six days a week. But it's still not enough for our family, so Mister Greylocke pays me for chores after school.

Charlie grabs a toolbox from the supply shed.

EXT. HILLTOP OF COAL MINE - CANARY GRAVEYARD - CONTINUOUS

During the day the cemetery seems peaceful. Its copper EDGEMORE sign swings unhinged in the chilly breeze. Charlie mends it with his tools.

COLE

Was building this cemetery one of your chores?

CHARLIE

Nah. I thought you birds deserved it for being brave. Now I think you deserve more for being tricked.

He adjusts a helmet hanging on a twig cross. It's Sam's.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

So what about your Pa? Does he work the mines too?

COLE

Yeah, he's a songbird. He --

Cole spots something up ahead, unbeknownst to Charlie.

CHARLIE

What kind of whistling does he do?
Is it jazzy like Count Basie?

No response. Charlie turns to find Cole in front of --

A GRAVE

Cole kneels before the tiny cross, emotion washing over him.
Charlie approaches. He reads the name on the helmet: COOP

CHARLIE (cont'd)

I... I'm sorry. I didn't know. I
remember your Pa. He was a good
man. I mean, a good bird.

Charlie steps aside to give Cole privacy.

Cole stares at the grave. His eyes well up. He seems smaller
than he already is.

COLE

I guess I'll never make you proud now.

A gentle breeze wisps through tall blades of grass. Beat.

BOOM!

Cole and Charlie whip their heads toward the mine entrance.
Clouds of ash billow out. Miners yell.

OLD GEEZER (O.S.)

Cave-in! Cave-in in tunnel fifteen!

CHARLIE

Fifteen? That's my Pop's tunnel!

He grabs Cole and races down the hill toward the --

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Old Canary helps Old Geezer blast an emergency siren.

VREEEEEEEWWW!!

Dirt-covered miners exit the mine. Charlie, with Cole in his
shirt pocket, runs into the tunnel. Old Geezer stops him.

CHARLIE

My Pop's in there!

OLD GEEZER

We know. But it's too dangerous.

Miners push a mine cart up out of the cave. Charlie's dad, POP HAGAN, lays inside the cart with his leg battered.

Motionless.

Charlie runs to his side, fearing the worst. Cole fears the worst for Charlie. Pop slowly opens his eyes.

POP HAGAN
Attaboy, Charlie.

Charlie hugs him. Pop musses up his son's hair, hiding his pain. He tries to get out of the cart but can't move his leg.

OLD GEEZER
We'll get you home. You too,
Charlie. I'll send for the doc.

A pair of brawny miners lift Pop out of the cart.

EXT. SCRANTON - DUSK

The miners drive a jalopy into downtown Scranton -- The Electric City. Pop Hagan lays in the back, Charlie by his side, Cole by Charlie's side. Potholes cause Pop discomfort.

CHARLIE
Hang on, Pop. We're almost home.

Cole takes in the passing surroundings: schoolhouse, movie theater, church. The colliery Breaker dominates the skyline. The patch town looks like the Aviary, but in human scale.

A huge electric trolley rumbles past with hobos in the back.

A towering newsboy peddles newspapers on the corner.

Human versions of Russian Canary, Welsh Canary, and Sam stagger out of a saloon.

HUMAN SAM
...so I look at 'im and says, "If
you don't get off your doopa and
back to work, you'll be flat!"

The miners laugh. Cole does a double-take. Massive déjà vu.

EXT. SCRANTON - MAIN STREET - DUSK

The jalopy turns a corner. Cole glances around.

Unlike the Aviary, the town lacks color. It's gloomy. Grey. Cole runs his finger feather along a fence. It's covered in coal dust like the rest of town. Even the flowers are ashen.

Cole looks around for something. He turns to Charlie.

COLE

Who feeds you? Who changes your water?

CHARLIE

We do.

Cole doesn't know how to respond.

EXT. HAGAN HOUSE - NIGHT

A HOME SWEET HOME sign tries to spruce up a ramshackle company house. It fails.

MOMMA HAGAN, a headstrong woman in a threadbare petticoat, nervously waits alongside a jolly DOCTOR with a medical bag.

When the jalopy pulls up, Momma runs to her husband.

MOMMA HAGAN

I heard the siren! And then the doctor came! I thought you were...

POP HAGAN

I'm fine, Mary. Really I am.

DOCTOR

Let me be the judge of that.

The brawny miners carry Pop inside. Everyone follows.

INT. HAGAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Miners place Pop on his bed and then exit. Doctor shuts the door behind him, leaving the family in the parlor. Momma busies herself by sewing a patch on some hand-me-downs.

MOMMA HAGAN

Now we wait.

Cole pokes his head out of Charlie's pocket and gazes about.

The home, cramped with mismatched furniture and family photos, gives off a cozy vibe. It's similar to Cole's nest box, including a little sister, ABBY.

ABBY

Where'd you get the canary? I want one too.

CHARLIE

Shhhh. You can't have one.

ABBY

Then I want him!

She grabs Cole. Charlie yanks him away from her.

CHARLIE

No, Abby. He's a coal mine canary. He's very special.

ABBY

Then why ain't he at the mine, bird brain?

Cole's offended by "bird brain".

MOMMA HAGAN

Good question. Why *isn't* he at the mine?

Charlie throws his hands behind him to hide Cole.

MOMMA HAGAN (cont'd)

You best not stolen that bird, else your father's pay will be docked.

CHARLIE

I didn't steal him. He followed me.

Annoyed, Cole bites Charlie's hand.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

OK, I took him. But he doesn't belong in the mine. None of the canaries do.

MOMMA HAGAN

Hand him over, Charlie. Now.

Charlie slowly uncups his hands to expose Cole. The bird nervously smiles, endearingly so. Momma's frown vanishes.

KNOCK KNOCK

Momma opens the door, revealing Greylocke.

MOMMA HAGAN (cont'd)
 Mister Greylocke. What a nice
 surprise. Please come in.

Greylocke enters, looking dapper in a new business suit. He
 has his cat, Nicodemus, on a leash.

Charlie again hides Cole behind him. Cole's sick of it.

MR. GREYLOCKE
 Sorry to intrude unannounced. I
 came by to see how the patient is.

MOMMA HAGAN
 The doctor's in with him, but
 you're welcome to wait. Can I fix
 you something to drink?

Nicodemus' nose twitches. He sniffs Charlie. Cole panics.

MR. GREYLOCKE
 Tea would be swell, thank you.

ABBY
 Hey, we got one of your cana --

MOMMA HAGAN
 Abby, go fix Mister Greylocke some
 tea.

ABBY
 You said you was gonna fix it.

MOMMA HAGAN
 Fix Mister Greylocke some tea.

Abby drags her feet into the kitchen.

MOMMA HAGAN (cont'd)
 Charlie, go help her.

No arguing from Charlie who runs to the kitchen. Nicodemus
 spots Cole, leaps, and is jerked by the leash. Cole laughs.

MR. GREYLOCKE
 You should be proud of your boy,
 Misses Hagan. He's a hard worker.

MOMMA HAGAN
 I'll be more proud if he keeps his
 sister from burning herself.

Abby burns herself.

ABBY

Owww!

Momma and Greylocke sit at the table. They're alone.

MOMMA HAGAN

My husband, he's a tough one. He'll be up and working again in no time.

MR. GREYLOCKE

I hope so. Otherwise, company policy takes effect.

He gestures toward Charlie in the kitchen.

MOMMA HAGAN

My husband will be working in no time.

Her confidence wanes. The Doctor emerges from the bedroom.

MR. GREYLOCKE

How is he, doc? Can he go back to work tomorrow?

DOCTOR

I'm afraid not. His leg is broken. Compound fracture of the tibia and fibula. He won't be able to work until it properly heals.

MOMMA HAGAN

How long will that take?

DOCTOR

A good six to eight weeks. Hopefully six.

Momma's complexion drains of color. Kids return with tea.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

I'll come back to set your father's leg. And I'll bring crutches. He's going to be fine.

The Doc smiles and exits. The kids rejoice.

ABBY

Pop's gonna be fine!

In her excitement, Abby accidentally spills a drop of tea on Greylocke's suit. It may as well be a gallon. He simmers.

Abby runs into Pop's room to celebrate.

MR. GREYLOCKE

Six to eight weeks is a long time
to be one man short, Misses Hagan.

MOMMA HAGAN

I realize that but my husband --

MR. GREYLOCKE

-- will lose his job unless someone
covers it while he's out. Someone
like your son. You have till Monday
to decide or I'll be forced to hire
somebody else. Good day.

Charlie, following his sister, halts upon hearing this.
Greylocke exits with Nicodemus hissing behind him.

Emotionally spent, Momma feeds coal into a stove to warm her
hands. She stares at a lump in her palm. Its luster reflects
her face. Frustrated, she flings it across the room.

Beat.

Defeated, Momma picks up the coal and feeds the stove. She
realizes that Charlie's been watching. She composes herself.

MOMMA HAGAN

Company policy is awful, but don't
you worry because you're not doing
it. Your father and I will figure
out something else.

Cole comes out of hiding. Momma smiles. Goes to the bedroom.

MOMMA HAGAN (cont'd)

Come on. Let's introduce your
father to your new friend.

Cole chirps and follows her, leaving Charlie in a daze.

INT. HAGAN HOUSE - CHARLIE AND ABBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Abby snores on the bottom bunk with a beat-up teddy bear.
Charlie's on the top with Cole snoring on the headboard.

Charlie leafs through a photo album, gazing at photos of him
and Pop playing ball, piggy-back riding, etc. Happier times.

Charlie tries to sleep but can't. He looks like the weight
of the world fell on his shoulders. His world.

EXT. SCRANTON - MORNING

Crisp snowflakes blanket the city and hide the coal dust.

INT. HAGAN HOUSE - MORNING

Abby builds a snowman outside, as viewed through a window inside. Momma helps Pop hobble on crutches to the table, his leg plastered in a cast.

MOMMA HAGAN

...what if I take your place? I'm strong, I can do it.

POP HAGAN

No. Who's going to take care of the kids while I'm recuperating?

She brings him scrambled eggs and coffee.

MOMMA HAGAN

Who's going to feed us while you're recuperating? Who's going to keep this leaky roof over our heads?

POP HAGAN

The mines are no place for a woman.

MOMMA HAGAN

But they are for a boy?

CREAK. They stop talking as Charlie enters, creaking the wood floor. Cole's on his shoulder.

POP HAGAN

Mornin', sleepy head. Finally decided to wake up, eh?

MOMMA HAGAN

What do you and your friend want to eat -- flapjacks or minced ham?

COLE

(whispers to Charlie)
Flapjacks.

CHARLIE

(to Momma)
Minced ham.

Cole looks annoyed as Momma cooks ham. Charlie faces his dad eye to eye (technically eye to chin).

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Pop. I'll do it.

POP HAGAN
Mince ham? Your mother's already --

CHARLIE
I'll work the mine.

Momma stops mincing. Everyone's shocked, including Cole.

POP HAGAN
Absolutely not.

CHARLIE
But you'll lose your job.

POP HAGAN
We'll survive. Now why don't you go
outside and play with your sister.

CHARLIE
It's only six to eight weeks. I can
handle that.

POP HAGAN
There's been two accidents in two
days. It's not safe.

COLE
(whispers to Charlie)
Definitely not safe.

CHARLIE
I'm plenty rugged, Pop, and I know
the mines from doing my chores.

POP HAGAN
You know above ground, not below.
Below is a whole other world.

CHARLIE
I know the exits and air shafts.

POP HAGAN
Mary, please talk some sense into
your son.

MOMMA HAGAN
Your father's right. It's not safe.
Plus, you'll miss school.

COLE
 (whispers to Charlie)
 Don't miss school. School's fun.

CHARLIE
 But I --

Pop slams down his coffee mug.

POP HAGAN
 I work the mines so you don't have
 to. So you and Abby can have a real
 childhood. Now go outside and enjoy
 it.

Pop opens his newspaper, obscuring his face from Charlie.

EXT. HAGAN HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Charlie angrily exits. Cole cheerfully follows.

COLE
 So what do you wanna play --
 Hopscotch? Hide 'n' Seek? I'll play
 anything but Duck Duck Goose. I
 know a few ducks and they don't
 deserve a game named after 'em.

Charlie finds Pop's work items sitting on a railing. He
 polishes the helmet and tests its carbide lamp.

COLE (cont'd)
 You're not thinking of going into
 the mines, are you?! Your folks
 told you not to.

CHARLIE
 They're also rationing food. I have
 to bring home bacon or win bread or
 whatever they call work.

COLE
 Who's going to cover your job while
 you cover your Pop's? Who's going
 to take care of the Aviary?

CHARLIE
 Abby. She likes caring for things.

Abby squeezes her snowman so hard that its head explodes.
 Cole cringes.

COLE

None of this is hunky-dory. You could get hurt. Your leg could get busted like your Pop's!

CHARLIE

It's only six to eight weeks. Hopefully six. I'm tough.

Charlie pulls his Pop's flannel shirt from a clothesline and holds it up to himself. Cole rips it away.

COLE

What about the poison gas, tough guy?! It can kill you!

CHARLIE

I... I can handle it.

COLE

Well, don't ask me to go in there with you!

CHARLIE

I'm not asking.

COLE

Fine, don't ask.

CHARLIE

Fine, don't go.

COLE/CHARLIE

Fine!

Charlie storms off with Pop's work gear.

Abby accidentally crushes her snowman. She's sad... until she spots Cole nearby. Cole shudders.

INT. AVIARY - TELEPHONE COMPANY - DAY

Switchboard operators connect other canaries' calls. Ma Cooper connects her own.

MA COOPER

Hi, Ruth. It's Susan. Is Cole over there? He's not? OK, thanks.

She makes another call.

MA COOPER (cont'd)
 Hi, Sandy. I'm looking for Cole,
 have you... No? Thank you.

The roller-skating boss gestures to a clock. Ma ignores him
 as she makes another call.

MA COOPER (cont'd)
 Francis, hello. Have you seen...?
 Excuse me?! I don't care what you
 think of my plumage, I'm looking
 for my boy. Is he there? No? OK.

Ma hangs up. Upset. Self-consciously she fluffs her plumage.

INT. HAGAN HOUSE - CHARLIE AND ABBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Now it's Cole's turn to stay awake while Charlie and Abby
 snore. Cole stares at the ceiling. Deep in thought.

EXT. HAGAN HOUSE - PORCH - SUNRISE

A milkman replaces empty bottles with full ones.

INT. HAGAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Momma puts the milk in the Frigidaire and groggily yells:

MOMMA HAGAN
 Wake up, kids. Time for breakfast.

She rakes the glowing coal in the rusty stove.

MOMMA HAGAN (cont'd)
 Charlie, Abby. Get up before you're
 late for school.

She spots a handwritten note on the table.

INSERT - THE NOTE, which reads:

"Left early for skool. Walkin Abby
 to class. stayin late fer spelling
~~tutering tudering two-dooring~~
 lesson. Luv, Charlie"

BACK TO MOMMA

MOMMA HAGAN (cont'd)
 Lord knows he can use the lesson.

EXT. COLLIERY - MORNING

Charlie drags Abby toward the mine. He wears Pop's oversized overalls and gum boots. She yawns. Half asleep.

ABBY

Why you wearing Pop's clothes? I'm cold. Where we going?

CHARLIE

Shhhh. It's a surprise.

ABBY

Too early for surprises.

He stops her at the Aviary.

CHARLIE

Even if it's your very own flock o' birds?

Her eyes widen with excitement. Canary eyes widen with fear.

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE - DAY

Greylocke sits behind a clean desk in a clean office. Off to the side, Nicodemus cleans himself. Charlie's grossed out.

MR. GREYLOCKE

Good to see your mother listened to reason. Be a real shame to lose your father's income. You'll be able to do his job and yours?

CHARLIE

Yes, sir.

MR. GREYLOCKE

Better not slack off taking care of those birds.

CHARLIE

No, sir. I mean yes, sir.

Nicodemus sniffs Charlie's satchel. Greylocke shakes the boy's hand.

MR. GREYLOCKE

OK then. Suit up. The lads on the gangway will show you the ropes.

CHARLIE

Ropes, sir?

Greylocke arches an eyebrow.

MR. GREYLOCKE

They'll show you how to do things.

Ahhhh. The kid gets it and hurries off. A yellow feather falls from his satchel. Only Nicodemus notices it.

EXT. BUSINESS OFFICE - PUNCH CLOCK

A punch clock hangs next to a slotted board full of time cards. Each miner takes a card and punches it in the clock.

THUNK

Charlie takes a card. He can't reach the clock so he stands on a crate. IMPATIENT MINER waits behind him. Charlie slides the card into the clock.

THUNK!

He looks at his card. The ink time stamp's in the wrong spot. He carefully slides it back in, shielding himself from --

THUNK!

The new stamp is in another wrong spot. He rolls up his sleeves. This means war.

THUNK! THUNK! THUNK! THUNK!

Ink completely covers his card except for the one spot he's supposed to stamp.

IMPATIENT MINER

Oh, for crying out loud.

Impatient Miner grabs the card, THUNKs it, and tosses it back so he can THUNK his own. Charlie nervously slots it.

EXT. SUPPLY SHED

Miners select equipment -- shovels, chisels, scuttle buckets. Charlie mimics them, trying to blend in but appearing lost.

When he notices Impatient Miner watching him, he puffs out his chest and grabs candles in a manly way. Unfortunately the "candles" are sticks of dynamite.

IMPATIENT MINER

Do us all a favor and don't blow us
up, ya follow?

He grabs the dynamite and replaces it with actual candles.
Charlie nervously gulps.

EXT. AVIARY

Miners line up with small cages. Old Geezer places a bird in
each one. Belgian Miner matches Belgian Canary, Russian
Miner matches Russian Canary, etc.

Anxious Charlie barely holds equipment, let alone a cage.

OLD GEEZER

Nervous? Long as you got a trusty
chirper, you'll live. How's him?

Geezer selects an eager canary who whistles impressively.
Charlie shrugs his indifference.

CHARLIE

He'll do, I guess.

COLE (O.S.)

Take me instead.

Cole climbs out of Charlie's satchel.

CHARLIE

Cole! What are you doing here?!

COLE

We're Char-Cole, ain't we? I'm here
to help.

He whistles horrendously.

COLE (CONT'D)

I'll get better.

CHARLIE

You could die. I can't be
responsible for that.

COLE

But you can for him?

He points to eager canary who loses his eagerness.

CHARLIE

No. But it's too risky. Stay in the Aviary where it's safe.

COLE

I can handle six to eight weeks. Hopefully six. Besides, have you seen the Aviary lately?

Charlie glances at Abby rattling the Aviary. Birds tremble.

CHARLIE

Alright, let's go.

Cole hops into Charlie's cage. They don helmets, realize they're backwards, turn them around, and follow the miners. They pass by...

Old Geezer, enjoys a hot dog/potato meal alongside Old Canary, who doesn't enjoy a wilted lettuce/mealworm salad. Geezer dubiously watches clumsy Cole and Charlie.

OLD GEEZER

I bet them two don't last a week.

Old Canary shakes his head in disagreement. He pantomimes swapping meals with Geezer.

OLD GEEZER (cont'd)

You think they will? OK. If'n they do, we swap meals. You got yerself a bet.

They shake hands/wings.

EXT./INT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Cole and Charlie follow the mine cart tracks down into the mine. It's like entering a baseball stadium without the fun.

INT. COAL MINE - MAIN TUNNEL

TEEN MINERS push a coal cart up the track toward our heroes.

COLE

At least you're not the only boy.

CHARLIE

Yeah! Hey, fellas. I'm new at --

TEEN MINERS

- Outta the way, kid.

(MORE)

TEEN MINERS (cont'd)
- Comin' through.

Cole and Charlie jump out of the way before being run over.

COLE
Maybe we should take the lift.

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - TOP LEVEL

Cole and Charlie board a large cage with rusted bars and teetering platform. Cole's in a cage within a cage, but this is the boy's first. The door CLANKS shut.

They're squeezed between miners who pinch noses and blow hard. Canaries pinch beaks. Charlie and Cole are clueless.

COLE
What do you think that's about?

Charlie shrugs. He has no idea.

The LIFT OPERATOR flips a lever outside the lift and a steel cable unwinds, plummeting the cage down like an anchor.

CHARLIE
AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

COLE
APPLESAUCE!!!!

The elevator cage scrapes against rock as it plummets 90 feet per second. Cold air shoots up Charlie's pant legs. Gravity yanks Cole to the ceiling of his mini-cage. They scream

all

the

way

down.

ELEVATOR SHAFT - BOTTOM LEVEL

KLANG! The cage rattles to a stop on the ground floor. Miners and birds un-pinch and exit like it's no big deal.

Charlie and Cole stumble out, clasp ears in pain. Hair and feathers stand on end. JERK MINER fakes sincerity to Charlie.

JERK MINER
Oh, forgot to tell you --

Jerk Canary does likewise to Cole.

JERK CANARY
 -- youse should pinch your beak.

Miners and canaries move on, cackling like school bullies.

Charlie slips on damp ground, knocking Cole from his cage.
 They shiver in the cold. It's day one and they're a mess.

A big hand pulls Charlie up from the ground. It belongs to:

WELSH MINER
 (re: the jerks)
 Hwyl fawr to them. They're twp in
 the head, they are.

A tiny wing pulls Cole up. It belongs to:

WELSH CANARY
 They worry you not knowing what to
 do will get them killed.

Alongside them are Russian Miner and Russian Canary.

RUSSIAN MINER
 (to Charlie)
 You are Hagan's little one, da? Is
 good man. Hard worker.

RUSSIAN CANARY
 (to Cole)
 We think your Papochka swell.

WELSH MINER
 (to Charlie)
 If you fancy a lesson, we'll show
 you what to do.

WELSH CANARY
 (to Cole)
 We take you under our wing, butty.

CHARLIE
 Thanks. Awful kind of youse to help
 on account of my Pop.

RUSSIAN MINER
 Da.

Beat.

RUSSIAN MINER/WELSH MINER
 And we do not want you to get us
 killed.

Charlie's not as touched as he just was. Ditto for Cole.

TRAINING SEQUENCE - CHARLIE AND COLE ARE TAUGHT THE ROPES

Set to music like "Working in the Coal Mine" by Lee Dorsey.

CHARLIE'S MONTAGE - HE LEARNS HOW TO MINE

-- Russian Miner shows Charlie how to carve out lumps of coal with hammer and chisel. Charlie sweats.

-- Welsh Miner teaches Charlie how to distinguish between coal and slate. Charlie bangs his head on a low ceiling.

-- Russian Miner drills a hole. Charlie fills it with dynamite, then dirt, then blasting caps.

RUSSIAN MINER

Nyet. Nyet. First load blasting caps, *then* dynamite, *then* dirt.

-- While blowing his nose, Charlie peeks into a derelict cave marked ENTER AT OWN RISK. Tunnels are numbered. This one is:

TUNNEL 11 (CONDEMNED)

A cross-breeze blows Charlie's handkerchief into the cave. He goes after it, using his helmet lamp to light the way.

Charlie picks up the hanky, turns to exit, and SLAMS into Welsh Miner, who startles him. Welsh Miner whispers.

WELSH MINER

Stay out of this tunnel, butty. Too dangerous it is. And too many bats.

CHARLIE

Bats?

Welsh Miner points up. Charlie tilts his head back and sees hanging stalactites.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

I only see stalactites. Or are they stalagmites? I get 'em confused.

WELSH MINER

I'm not being funny. Have another gander.

They aim their lamps at the "stalactites," which turn out to be sleeping bats hanging upside-down! Dozens of them.

Charlie stares. Aghast. Red eyes flick open and a bat stares back. The boy freaks out and runs off. Welsh Miner follows.

The red eyes slowly close.

COLE'S MONTAGE - HE LEARNS HOW TO WHISTLE

-- Welsh Canary shows Cole how to warm up his vocal cords.

WELSH CANARY

You'll stay in rhythm with your
miner, you will. Match his
hammering beat for beat.

-- Russian Canary instructs Cole on how to practice pitch.

RUSSIAN CANARY

Vary tempo, comrade. Slow in
morning when miners motivated. Fast
in afternoon when lose steam.

-- Cole butchers the musical scale. Welsh Canary plugs his ears with cotton balls.

WELSH CANARY

Now choose a tidy tune your miner
will recognize down here.

Cole tries a folk tune like "Sixteen Tons". Welsh Canary doesn't like it.

He tries a country tune like "Big Bad John". Russian Canary doesn't like it.

He tries "Whistle While You Work" from Snow White. No one likes it.

COLE

What was my Pa's song?

The immigrant birds cheep "Rhapsody in Blue", but struggle with high notes.

RUSSIAN CANARY

Is a tricky melody. Only your
Papochka do it.

Cole massacres the tune. Welsh Canary shares cotton balls with Russian Canary.

RUSSIAN CANARY (cont'd)
Only your Papochka do it.

END TRAINING SEQUENCE

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Miners exit covered in soot. Indistinguishable from each other except for the short one -- Charlie.

He carries Cole, also covered in soot. They move with more confidence than before.

Watching them are Old Geezer, who frowns, and Old Canary, who grins. Old Canary grabs Geezer's hot dog meal. He savors it while shoving mealworms toward Geezer. Geezer sighs.

OLD GEEZER
A bet's a bet.

Geezer forces himself to eat a slimy wriggling worm. He swallows. Beat. He shrugs -- Not bad.

EXT. HAGAN HOUSE - OUTHOUSE - NIGHT

Charlie hides behind the outhouse, quickly washing off soot with a hose. So does Cole. They see their breath in the air.

FLUSH

They freeze in place. The outhouse door opens and out steps Momma Hagan. She sees them. Busted.

INT. HAGAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Charlie and Cole shiver so much that they can't eat supper without food shaking off silverware.

MOMMA HAGAN
Must've been some spelling lesson
to need scrubbing down afterwards.

CHARLIE
Some what lesson?

MOMMA HAGAN
Spelling. The reason you stayed
after school.

She holds up his note.

CHARLIE
Oh, spelling. Yeah. Lots of chalk
dust. All over us.

Cole coughs up a cloud of dust. It's black.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Teacher likes black chalk.

POP HAGAN
How was the lesson?

CHARLIE
Smooth. Sweet! I learned a lot.

MOMMA HAGAN
Wonderful. Then you'll be home
tomorrow at the regular time.

Cole dope-slaps Charlie.

CHARLIE
Well, it wasn't *that* sweet. Teacher
wants me to stay after tomorrow.
And maybe the next day.

POP HAGAN
And the day after that?

Pop's waiting for the truth and Charlie knows it.

CHARLIE
I have a confession to make. I...

His parents lean forward. Cole doesn't know what to expect.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
...I'm a really lousy speller. I
may have to stay after a lot more.

POP HAGAN
Six to eight weeks more?

CHARLIE
Hopefully only six.

Charlie and his parents exchange glances. As does Cole. The
truth, on both sides, comes across in their eyes.

POP HAGAN
You're as stubborn as your old man.

MOMMA HAGAN

And we appreciate it. Youse both be careful. Because of the chalk dust.

Charlie and Cole nod. Everyone resumes eating, content with the outcome. Except Abby who missed the glances.

ABBY

I'll be home late too after taking care of the canaries while Charlie works the mine.

Everyone sighs except oblivious Abby.

ABBY (cont'd)

What?

INT. AVIARY - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS - MA AND KATIE COOPER SEARCH FOR COLE

-- SCHOOLHOUSE - Ma and Katie question Cole's teacher.

SCHOOLMARM

Sorry, Misses Cooper. I...

-- POLICE PRECINCT - Ma questions the police.

IRISH CANARY COP

...haven't seen your lad...

-- VIEW-MASTER THEATER - Ma and Katie question Welles.

ORIOLE WELLES

...in over a week...

-- EMPORIUM - Ma questions Bobby who buys Jawbreakers. She's looked less hopeful with each inquiry, until:

BOBBY

...but I may know someone who has.

INT. THE BLACK LUNG - DAY

Polly slouches at the bar in the near empty saloon, finishing a thimble of foam. She slides it to the bartender.

POLLY

Another Early Bird Special.

Bartender refills the thimble. The door opens, letting in sobering daylight. Polly squints.

In walks Ma Cooper, clearly out of her element. She shields Katie's eyes from seeing tipsy birds. She finds Polly.

MA COOPER

Sorry to bother you, but I'm looking for my son. He's three inches tall, yellow, cute as a --

POLLY

I know your son, Misses Cooper. The stubborn one who likes to make birds feel guilty.

MA COOPER

Yes, well, be that as it may he's gone missing. He was last seen with He-Who-Cares-For-Us before She-Who-Cares-For-Us took over. I can't find Cole anywhere in the Aviary.

POLLY

Have you looked outside the Aviary?

MA COOPER

Outside? Katie, cover your ears. You don't need to hear adult talk.

KATIE

But I wanna hear it.

Ma makes Katie cover her ears. Katie frowns. Ma faces Polly.

MA COOPER

You really think he's outside?

POLLY

If he hasn't been seen since He-Who-Cares-For-Us left, then stands to reason they're both out there. Or in the mine. Now if you'll excuse me, I have some business to handle.

She drinks. Ma stares out a window at the distant Wild Zone, lost in thought. Polly notices. She sighs.

POLLY (cont'd)

Your boy's a wingful, heyna?

MA COOPER

That's putting it mildly. He's a rare bird. Curious to a fault. Righteous. Headstrong.

POLLY
He doesn't forget anything --

MA COOPER
-- he questions everything --

POLLY
-- and he can never --

MA COOPER
-- ever --

POLLY/MA COOPER
-- leave well enough alone.

A moment of connection. Katie uncovers her ears.

POLLY
Sometimes well enough is enough.

MA COOPER
Sometimes folks are happy the way things are. Even if that way isn't right.

POLLY
Even if they want it right but are afraid to make it so. Why can't he understand that?

Katie's bored by "adult talk". She covers her ears again.

MA COOPER
He gets it from his Pa. When my husband returns from Edgemore, he'll have a thing or two to say to Cole about his behavior.

Guilt-ridden Polly avoids eye contact.

POLLY
You heard of your husband's promotion from Silas. Talk to him. I've been in the Wild but he's been in the mine. That's all I can do.

MA COOPER
Can you take me to the --

POLLY
That's all I can do.

She turns her back on Ma. Defiant. Ma exits with Katie, closing the door and casting Polly back into shadow. Polly downs her thimble and slides it to the bartender.

POLLY (cont'd)
Another Special.

EXT. COLLIERY - BUSINESS OFFICE - PUNCH CLOCK - MORNING

Miners punch in for work. THUNK. THUNK. Impatient Miner wearily files his time card ahead of Charlie.

IMPATIENT MINER
Another day, another dollar.

CHARLIE
We get a whole dollar? Wow!

He low-fives Cole. Impatient Miner shakes his head.

Charlie steps on a crate to reach the clock. As he gains height, he's able to peer into the --

BUSINESS OFFICE - WINDOW

Greylocke strokes Nicodemus while listening to a traveling SALESMAN's pitch. From an all-purpose display trunk, the Salesman pulls out a small metal device.

SALESMAN
You place the gas detectors in each tunnel. Forty feet from each other like canary cages. You turn 'em on. When they detect toxic gases, an alarm goes off to warn the miners. Easy peasy lemon squeezy.

MR. GREYLOCKE
How much?

SALESMAN
A measly ten ninety-five each. Cheaper than last time.

Greylocke inspects the device, then hands it back.

MR. GREYLOCKE
Canaries are still cheaper.

Charlie and Cole are floored.

INT. COAL MINE - DAY

Charlie loads coal into a wheelbarrow. Cole stewes in a cage.

COLE

I can't believe Greylocke won't buy those detectors just 'cause they cost more than us!

CHARLIE

I didn't even know they existed.

COLE

Those machines could replace us canaries and we'd all be safe. We gotta convince him to buy them.

Miners pass by with bird cages full of BULLY CANARIES.

BULLY CANARIES

- The bird who cried wolf is here.
- Must've stopped believing his own baloney about Edgemore.

The bullies snicker. Cole ignores them, until he sees Bobby.

COLE

Bobby?! What are you doing here?

BOBBY

Fifth time's the charm. Have you been here since you flew the coop?

COLE

I got more proof. I just heard the mine boss talk about poison gas!

BOBBY

I got in trouble 'cause of you. Your Ma's worried sick for you. And you're still chirping about pranks?! You're off the cob.

Bobby and the others move on. Cole sulks.

COLE

Convince Greylocke to buy detectors. I can't even convince my own kind they're croaking here. This is for the birds. And I can say that 'cause I am one.

He attempts to whistle "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen".

CHARLIE
You could strike.

COLE
Strike? Like in bowling?

CHARLIE
Nah. Whenever my Pop comes home grumpy, he talks about goin' on strike with the miners. I think it's how to get the boss to make things better.

COLE
Me not croaking is definitely better. Let's strike.

CHARLIE
I hear it's hard to do. You gotta organize and stuff.

COLE
Organize what?

CHARLIE
I dunno, but Pop yells it all the time. "We gotta organize!" You gotta miss work too.

COLE
You don't wanna be here anyway.

CHARLIE
What if we get fired?

COLE
We work hard and we're proud of what we do. We deserve better and it seems the only way to get it is to strike.

Charlie pushes the wheelbarrow, straining under its weight.

CHARLIE
I don't... think it's... so bad.

COLE
Oh no? Take a gander at my bird's eye view. Ever wonder why they call Stubby Stubby?

He points to Stubby Miner who wipes off sweat with his hand -- a hand minus two fingers.

COLE (cont'd)
Or Limpy Limpy?

Cole motions to a limping miner who shakes pebbles out of his boot and, in doing so, exposes his peg leg.

COLE (cont'd)
Then there's One Lung Louis.

Louis hears his name. He waves, then goes into a coughing fit. Black spit sprays everywhere. Charlie looks disgusted.

COLE (cont'd)
And they're not the only cripples.

Charlie sees miners with aching backs and swollen knees, eye patches and violent coughs. Everyone suffers, but they work.

COLE (cont'd)
Still don't think it's bad?

Charlie shrugs and returns to work.

SAME - NEXT DAY

A miner hears a CREAKING sound. Others hear SPLINTERING. They stare at the slate ceiling. Dirt trickles to the floor.

MINER FOREMAN
If timbers are talkin', miners get
walkin'!

A miner puts his ear to a wooden support beam and listens. Beat. Silence. He gives thumbs up. Everyone resumes work like nothing happened.

Cole sees the frightened expression on Charlie's face.

COLE
Still don't think it's bad?

Charlie shrugs and returns to work.

SAME - NEXT DAY

Charlie packs TNT into holes. Jerk Miner yells...

JERK MINER
Fire! Fire! Fire!

...in three different directions. Charlie's barely out of range before crazed Jerk Miner pushes down a TNT plunger.

BOOM!

Jerk Miner cackles as rubble bounces off the boy's helmet.

COLE
STILL DON'T THINK IT'S BAD?

Charlie shrugs. Returns to work.

SAME - NEXT DAY

Charlie sits on a gangway and pulls a hoagie from his lunch pail, ready to eat. A rat nabs it and scampers off. Charlie pulls out licorice. Another rat nabs it. His stomach growls.

COLE
Still don't --

CHARLIE
You don't get it! If I strike, I
don't work. If I don't work, I
don't get paid and my family
starves. Real life ain't like the
Aviary. We don't have a giant hand
changing our water and feeding us.

Cole falls silent as Charlie's situation finally sinks in.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Strike all you want but leave me
out of it.

With their backs to each other, Charlie renews mining and Cole renews whistling.

EXT. GILDED CAGE - DAY

Ma Cooper rings the doorbell. Katie's by her side, bored by being dragged around the Aviary. She tugs on Ma's purse.

MA COOPER
Please stop before it breaks.

Randall opens door. He's shining a pair of wingtip shoes.

MA COOPER (cont'd)
Hello. I have to talk to Silas.

RANDALL
Come back in a few chimes, wren.
We're togging to the nines for this
dim's clambake.

Ma scratches her head -- Huh? Katie tugs on the purse strap.

MA COOPER

Katie. Stop.

(to Randall)

But I need his help to find my son.

RANDALL

And I need to gleam my ground
grippers.

He shuts the door in Ma's beak. SNAP! The strap breaks and her purse spills to the floor.

MA COOPER

Katie! For the love of --

Katie's eyes tremble. Ma's annoyance changes to compassion as she hugs her daughter tight.

MA COOPER (cont'd)

Do whatever you want. Just don't
ever run away.

Katie looks at her mother concerned.

INT. AVIARY - DAY

Canaries eat from nearly empty seed dispensers. A shadow creeps over them.

ABBY (O.S.)

Time for new food, birdie birds!

Abby fills the dispensers while birds still feed, accidentally causing some to choke.

ABBY

And new water!

She changes the water, almost drowning a bird. She heavy pets another who bites. She tries to hug anybody, but they scatter.

CANARIES

She-Who-Tortures-Us! AHHHHHH!!

Abby could pass for Lenny from *Of Mice and Men*.

CLICK CLICK

Katie grabs Abby's attention by clicking her beak.

ABBY

Hey, bird. How come you're not
afraid of me like the others?

Abby reaches for Katie, who quivers in fear.

ABBY (cont'd)

Oh. You are afraid. I just like to
squeeze things. Is that so bad?

She sighs of sadness. Katie empathizes. She apprehensively
lets Abby crush her with a hug. Content, Abby lets go.

Katie catches her breath. She shows a photo of her and Cole.

ABBY (cont'd)

That's my brother's bird. He's *your*
brother? Wow. Small patch town.

Katie pantomimes Cole arguing with Ma, running away, etc.

ABBY (cont'd)

I didn't know he had family. He's
been staying at our home. Except
when he's in the mines like now.

Katie sighs of sadness. Abby empathizes.

ABBY (cont'd)

You wanna see him?

No longer afraid, Katie speaks:

KATIE

Yes.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15 - DAY

Miners use an electric drill to burrow into a shiny coal
seam. It's loud enough to drown out the canaries singing.

Charlie and Cole work without eye contact. A nearby canary
gets drowsy.

JERK CANARY

I must've ate too much at lunch.
Feelin' sleepy.

Another canary yawns.

STOCKY CANARY

I know wha'cha mean.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Old Geezer, with half of his hat eaten, sits in his rocking chair playing harmonica. He plays "Which Side Are You On?", a famous labor union song. Old Canary whistles along.

Abby tiptoes behind them. SNAP. She steps on a branch, incurring Geezer's attention.

OLD GEEZER
How do, Abby. Torture anythin'
lately?

He recognizes Katie in Abby's pocket.

OLD GEEZER (cont'd)
You got yerself a bros, doncha? He
couldn't carry a tune if it was in
a bucket. What you girls up to?

ABBY
Lookin' for Cole. I mean, looking
for coal. For a snowman. You know,
"Corncob pipe. Button nose. Two
eyes made out of..."

Geezer looks skeptical. They give him puppy dog eyes. He softens.

OLD GEEZER
Help yerselves then.

He and Old Canary resume their music-making, this time performing "Frosty the Snowman".

Abby and Katie sneak behind them and into the mine.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15

Stocky Canary stops singing and lays down for a nap. Cole notices, but doesn't think anything of it.

More drowsy canaries lay down. Their tail feathers bob back and forth -- a sign of avian illness.

Cole's eyes bug out with fear.

INT. AVIARY - GILDED CAGE - ATRIUM

The Avian Bandstand sign blinks as the Elders listen to a contestant croon. They confer and decide.

SILAS

Selected.

The audience cheers. Polly's heart isn't in it.

The next contestant hops on stage. It's Ma Cooper. The Elders are taken aback, particularly Polly.

SILAS (cont'd)

Misses Cooper, aren't you a little old to audition?

MA COOPER

I'm not here to audition.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15

Canaries curl up in cages and sleep. Cole covers his beak.

COLE

Don't fall asleep! You'll never wake up if you fall asleep!

WELSH CANARY

I just... went to nest too late, I did...

COLE

No. It's the gas. It's poisonous!

RUSSIAN CANARY

Gas? Nyet. I smell nothing.

COLE

It's here. Trust me.

JERK CANARY

Sure, Chicken Little. We... heard it all... before...

The birds belly laugh, which midway turns into a group yawn.

Curt Canary, the new Canary Foreman as shown by his new foreman helmet, pulls out a chew stick.

CURT CANARY

Everyone take five. Chew 'em if you got 'em.

He gnaws the stick and cozies up for nap time.

Cole notices Bobby making a nest.

COLE

Bobby, stay awake. Cover your beak!

BOBBY

I'm just taking a... cat nap...
minus the...

Bobby's eyelids close. Cole's frantic.

INT. AVIARY - GILDED CAGE - ATRIUM

A flashlight spotlights Ma Cooper as she pleads to Silas before an audience of citizens.

MA COOPER

...I think he's outside the Aviary.
Maybe in the mines. You've been
there. Please help me find him.

CITIZEN CANARIES

- Boooooo! Back to the show.
- Get her off the stage!

Irish Canary Cop goes to remove her. Silas waves him off.

SILAS

Let me get this straight. You want
me to find your son who broke laws
we hold dear, incited a public
riot, and embarrassed me in front
of the entire flock?

She wipes her eyes, which for once appear vulnerable rather than tough.

MA COOPER

You were there when my husband was
promoted. I, I just thought... you
could help.

Gossipy Ladybirds cackle in the audience.

HAUGHTY LADYBIRD

You'd think she'd visit a preening
parlor before such melodrama!

Ma sobs. Polly offers a tissue, but Randall holds her back.

Silas switches gears and silences the jeering crowd.

SILAS

Have some compassion! Raising two
children is a lot for one parent.

MA COOPER

Cole's a good kid. I... I don't know why he lied and ran away.

SILAS

Maybe lying is his way of seeking attention. Let him get it out of his system. When he returns, show him how special he is. He'll behave after that.

Silas snags Polly's tissue and gives it to Ma.

MA COOPER

I guess that makes sense.

SILAS

Of course it does.

Polly watches in disgust, but no more.

POLLY

Enough of this! Your son never lied, Misses Cooper. We lied.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15

Cole rattles his cage trying to get Charlie's attention.

COLE

Charlie, listen to me! Turn around.

CHARLIE

No more talk of striking. You sound like a broken record.

COLE

This isn't about that! It's the canaries -- They're dying!

Charlie turns and sees dozens of bird cages with dozing birds. Miners are oblivious due to drilling.

Charlie's eyes widen with fear.

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - MID-LEVEL

Abby and Katie pinch their nose and beak as they ride the rusty, rickety elevator down into the deep, dark shaft.

ABBY/KATIE

Wahooooooooooo!!!

Unlike their brothers, they love it.

INT. AVIARY - GILDED CAGE - ATRIUM

Polly takes to the stage.

POLLY
Your son is right, Misses Cooper.
About everything.

SILAS
Remove her from the premises!

Irish Canary Cop moves in for Polly but she flies around to avoid him.

POLLY
She should know. They all should
know! Tell them!

RANDALL
Don't play us cut rate for an off-
time jive, dutchess. Git off the
main kick and final to your pad!

Polly pins her eyes, which for once appear tough rather than vulnerable.

POLLY
You know no one understands you,
hey-na?

Randall's surprised to see everyone nod in agreement.

POLLY (cont'd)
He didn't always chirp like this.
Only since he wanted to forget the
past.

RANDALL
Same can be said for your dumb
blonde routine.

POLLY
Yes, it can. But not anymore.

She yanks off her blonde head feathers. It's a wig.
Ladybirds gasp in the audience.

SNOOTY LADYBIRD
I knew those weren't her natural
feathers!

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15

Charlie gives his handkerchief to Cole to better cover his beak. He runs to Miner Foreman who supervises the drilling.

Charlie points to the unconscious birds. Miner Foreman sees them and orders the drill turned off.

MINER FOREMAN

Listen up! We got ourselves a gas leak. Blackdamp. Everybody out now!

Miners grab bird cages and head to the exit. The commotion stirs Bobby who sees Miner Foreman cover his mouth.

MINER FOREMAN (cont'd)

Carbon monoxide's leaking somewhere down here. Everyone get topside!

BOBBY

Cole... was right.

He tries to cover his beak, but his wing falls to the floor.

INT. AVIARY - GILDED CAGE - ATRIUM

Polly, sans wig, faces off with Silas.

POLLY

Now tell them the truth, Silas.

CITIZEN CANARIES

- Tell us what?
- What should we know?

Silas and Randall remain mute.

POLLY

If I have to be the stool pigeon, I will. And I'm not even a pigeon.

She speaks into a microphone.

POLLY (cont'd)

You should all know that --

SILAS

-- that she is sick! Very contagious. Keeping her beak closed is beneficial to us all.

Randall detains Polly and covers her beak.

In the audience, Welles jots down notes.

ORIOLE WELLES
Now *this* is a dramatic performance.

On stage, Ma Cooper bites Randall who releases Polly. Polly blurts into the mike:

POLLY
We die in the mines by sniffing
toxic gas to protect the miners!

The audience gasps.

SILAS
That is not the truth.

POLLY
It is. And it's only half of it.

INT. COAL MINE - MAIN TUNNEL

Abby and Katie ride an empty mine cart past the elevator.
Past TUNNEL 9... TUNNEL 10...

ABBY
Charlie's tunnel is fifteen. Should
be down the line a bit.

The cart hits a bump, causing Katie to drop the photo of her and Cole. It falls to the ground.

INT. AVIARY - GILDED CAGE - ATRIUM

The audience stares at Silas center stage. The lighting crew aims another flashlight his way. He squints.

SILAS
Yes. We warn the miners by dying.
They are such vile creatures. We
discovered their scheme recently
and planned to announce --

POLLY
Sing the real truth. Sing like a
cana -- sing like one of us.

MA COOPER
Sing it.

SILAS

Ma'am, we live in a cage that has bars, and those bars have to be guarded by birds with helmet lamps. Who's going to do it? You, Misses Cooper?

MA COOPER

Sing it. I want to know.

SILAS

No, you don't.

MA COOPER

I need to know!

The audience chants -- "Sing it! Sing it!" Reporter Bird snaps photos. Silas breaks.

SILAS

It's made up! All of it!

Everyone's stunned speechless. Welles stops taking notes.

SILAS (cont'd)

Your husband and I worked the mine the year it opened. Mostly Tunnel Eleven. There was a cave-in. The miners shored it up and thought it was fine, but they were wrong. It released toxic gas from the ground.

(beat)

I am the only bird who made it out.

Ma Cooper absorbs the truth of her husband's "promotion". Her body language exhibits pride, sorrow, relief and most importantly -- closure.

MA COOPER

Why didn't you tell anyone?

POLLY

He did.

INT. COAL MINE - MAIN TUNNEL - ELEVATOR - BOTTOM LEVEL

Miners ride the elevator up to the surface world.

WELSH MINER

Won't Mister Greylocke be tamping that we are breaking so early?

MINER FOREMAN

We're not breaking to play
stickball. He'll understand.

Further back in line Charlie finds something on the mine
cart tracks. He hands it to Cole.

CHARLIE

Dropped something.

It's Katie's photo.

COLE

I didn't drop this.

EXT. HILLTOP OF COAL MINE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The cemetery isn't here yet but the birch tree is. Sans zoot
suit, young Randall carves a Cupid heart and initials: P+R

Young Polly, sans wig, kisses Randall. No couple could be
happier as evident by their mutual tail flipping.

POLLY (V.O.)

Happier times. Until we heard
commotion.

They see miners escape the mine but only one canary -- Young
Silas. He staggers and falls. Polly and Randall help him up.

POLLY (V.O.) (cont'd)

He told us what happened and we
immediately wanted to tell the
flock. But --

Silas pulls them back from flying to the Aviary.

POLLY (V.O.) (cont'd)

He convinced us that if canaries
knew what can happen in the mines,
they'd stop going in. Then the
miners would stop caring for us.
We'd have to fend for ourselves in
the Wild and we're too domesticated
to survive. Some more than others.

The plump cricket skitters past Randall, freaking him out.

POLLY (V.O.) (cont'd)

So we swore an oath to hide the
truth. In its place we created
Elders and Edgemore, promotions and
Bandstand.

Silas extends his wing. Randall places his wing on top. They wait for Polly. She's torn.

POLLY (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Whatever it took to keep status
 quo.

She caves to the pressure and places her wing on theirs.

INT. AVIARY - GILDED CAGE - ATRIUM - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Polly wraps up her tale to Ma and the flabbergasted crowd.

POLLY
 That was before the guilt took its
 toll. On me anyway. But I would
 love to know I'm not the only one.

Polly glances to Randall. He avoids eye contact, which disappoints her.

VREEEEWWW!!

The mine's emergency siren blares in the distance. Everyone cranes their necks toward it. Ma Cooper addresses Silas.

MA COOPER
 You used to tell us that sound was
 good. What does it really mean?

SILAS
 You ask a lot of questions, Misses
 Cooper. I see where your son gets
 it from.

MA COOPER
 Actually, I get it from him. What
 does the sound mean?

SILAS
 It means someone isn't coming home.

Color drains from Ma's face.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15

The mine cart breaks to a halt near the quiet drill. Abby jumps out with Katie fluttering alongside her. They shiver.

KATIE
 It's freezing down here. You sure
 this is the right tunnel?

They scope the area, empty but for tools. Water drips down stone walls.

ABBY

Yeah. They must've broke for lunch.

KATIE

At four PM? Let's go find them.

ABBY

And get yelled at by the old geezer? No thanks. Let's wait here. It won't take 'em long to eat.

KATIE

It'd take me long. I always gotta separate my food. It's odd, I know.

ABBY

It's not odd. I do it too! Corn can't touch the peas --

KATIE

-- peas can't touch the grubs!

They bond.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Miners emerge from darkness into blinding daylight. They squint. Some slip on ice. They drop bird cages and inhale crisp Appalachian air.

Able-bodied miners, including Charlie, help weaker ones.

MINER FOREMAN

Give the poor devils some air!

Bobby lays in his fragile cage. Silent and still. Cole whips open the door and shakes him by the shoulders.

COLE

Wake up, Bobby, wake up!

Cole slaps him. Bobby comes to, mad till he sees Cole. Bobby smiles the smile of a long lost pal.

BOBBY

Cole, you were right. I should've believed you. I... I should've stood up for you.

He lowers his head in shame.

COLE

Stand up for me now and we'll call
it even.

With Cole's help, Bobby stands. He's wobbly but alive.

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE

The traveling Salesman pitches again to Greylocke, this time diamond jewelry in his all-purpose display trunk.

SALESMAN

...made of the finest diamonds this
side of the Appalachian Trail. And
they come with matching cat collars.

He pulls out a diamond collar. It makes Nicodemus purr and Greylocke smile... until they hear the emergency siren.

INT. HAGAN HOUSE - BEDROOM

Momma Hagan stands by as the Doctor examines Pop's broken leg. Doc delivers good news. Everyone smiles... until they hear the siren.

INT. AVIARY - PERIMETER

Polly and Ma Cooper land. They try to open the cage lock, try to squeeze through the bars, but to no avail.

POLLY

There's still one more way.

Polly soars off with Ma close behind.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Miners and canaries recuperate. Charlie and Cole reunite.

COLE

How are the miners?

CHARLIE

OK. How are the canaries?

COLE

They'll be OK.

Old Geezer strides over with Old Canary.

OLD GEEZER
Charlie, where's your sister at?

CHARLIE
My sister?

OLD GEEZER
She was here with a bird. One that
looks like yours.

Cole clues in. He whips out Katie's photo. Charlie clues in.
They turn around in unison and face the mouth of the mine.

EXT. SUPPLY SHED - MINUTES LATER

Charlie exits the shed with goggles and gas mask.

CHARLIE
No, Cole. You can't even fly.

Cole fans his flight feathers, which have partly grown back.

COLE
My feathers are almost in. Our
sisters will die if I don't go!

Charlie straps on his mask.

CHARLIE
You'll die if you do! It's more
risky for you than me. One sniff
and you're down for the count. You
hear me, Cole? ... Cole?

Cole makeshifts a tiny gas mask from Charlie's hanky, a can,
a fly swatter mesh, and charcoal. He straps it on with an
elastic. Charlie admires it.

COLE
You should see my Popsicle stick
furniture.

Charlie's not going to win this argument. He and Cole race
unseen past the adults and into the mine.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15

Abby and Katie continue to bond, but with less energy.

KATIE
My mother yells at me all the time.
She treats me like I'm helpless.

ABBY

Mine too.

Katie's dizzy. She yawns.

INT. COAL MINE - MAIN TUNNEL

Charlie and Cole race through escaping miners racing the opposite direction. They're salmon swimming upstream.

COLE

We're getting nowhere fast.

CHARLIE

Short cut. Here!

Charlie leads them into condemned Tunnel 11, ignoring the ENTER AT OWN RISK sign.

EXT. AVIARY - PURPLE STONE

Polly and Ma Cooper roll the purple stone aside, revealing the former hole in the chicken wire fence. They struggle to bend the fence corner up, but can't.

MA COOPER

Not strong... enough.

They shut their eyes and push. Sweating. Straining. The metal wire doesn't budge. A shadow covers them.

KER-RRRRUNK!

The wire slowly bends. They open their surprised eyes. Polly notices the shadow. She looks up and sees --

RANDALL

With bulging biceps, he curls back the wire to create a hole. Ma pecks him on the cheek.

MA COOPER (cont'd)

Thanks for doing the right thing.

She squeezes through the hole and zips toward the mine. Polly follows but Randall stops her.

RANDALL

Polly, listen. I been a cut rate square who -- Err, I mean...

He sheds his fedora and hepster persona.

RANDALL (cont'd)
 You never deserved the way I
 treated you. I'm sorry. Would you
 consider being lovebirds again?

She beams.

POLLY
 I'm hep to that jive, gate! Now
 knock me a kiss.

They kiss. A kiss long overdue.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 11 (CONDEMNED)

Tighter and darker the tunnel becomes as two cones of
 light -- one smaller than the other -- speed through.

Charlie jumps over a stalagmite, only to run head first into
 a hanging stalactite. It crushes his helmet lamp.

CHARLIE
 Ow! My lamp's beat. Where are you?

COLE
 I'll take the lead.

Cole takes flight. Shaky at first, but then better, though
 not 100%. Charlie tries to follow Cole's tiny light.

CHARLIE
 I can barely see you.

COLE
 Follow my voice.

Cole cheeps "Rhapsody in Blue". Gershwin would cringe.
 Charlie *does* cringe, but he follows.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15

Katie curls up on a stone, trying to keep her eyes open. Her
 tail bobs while Abby vents.

ABBY
 ...I get yelled at for the tiniest
 thing, but my folks let Charlie get
 away with murder.

KATIE
 I hate... my brother too...

Katie barely finishes her sentence before succumbing to slumber. Abby looks at the bird laying on cold hard slate.

ABBY

That looks comfy.

She yawns. Tendrils of black gas quietly snake through the tunnel, closing in on the sisters.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 11 (CONDEMNED)

Cole whistles "Rhapsody" and leads Charlie past cobwebbed lanterns, long since extinguished.

Cole's helmet light glints off of abandoned bird cages. Ragged feathers lay about. He gulps in fear but presses on.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Greylocke and Nicodemus arrive on the scene.

MR. GREYLOCKE

What's going on? Why isn't anyone working?

MINER FOREMAN

Blackdamp. It's everywhere. I never seen it this bad.

MR. GREYLOCKE

(unfazed)

Why isn't anyone working?

MINER FOREMAN

Pardon?

MR. GREYLOCKE

I bought you gas masks for this. Use them and get back to work.

Miner Foreman's jaw drops. Welsh Miner whispers.

WELSH MINER

Stickball, eh, butty?

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 11 (CONDEMNED)

Cole wobbly swerves and banks through an obstacle course of stalactites. Some seem to move. He stops whistling.

COLE

Did those stalactites move? Or are they stalagmites? I get them con --

Charlie's eyes widen in recognition.

CHARLIE

They're neither. Get away from 'em. They're --

Cole's helmet light exposes Hungarian bats hanging upside-down. Cole silently panics. He and Charlie whisper.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Luckily they're asleep. Come on.

COLE

We have to warn them.

CHARLIE

They'll bite you. Let's go.

Cole flies toward Charlie. He stops. Ponders. He turns back.

COLE

Hey! Hey, wake up!

Red eyes open. Dozens. The fearsome fanged creatures of the night come to life. Cole quakes. Maybe Charlie was right.

BATS

- Állj, we sleep here!
- Do we bother you when you snooze?
- I work nights. I need rest.

COLE

Blackdamp's everywhere. Leave! Go!!

BAT LEADER

The Black Damp!?

The bats panic. They mobilize and swarm toward Charlie. Charlie panics. He covers himself as the bats flap past him.

Beat. Charlie uncovers. He looks around in the darkness.

CHARLIE

Cole, where are you? Cole?

No answer. Just silence. The kid gets nervous. And then:

COLE (O.S.)

I'm over here. Hurry!

CAVERN

Charlie catches up to Cole who has found a boarded up exit.

CHARLIE
This is it! On the count of three
we knock it down.

They tighten their helmets and aim their bodies toward the cracked wooden boards. Charlie counts to three.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15 - CONTINUOUS

WHAM! The rotten wood splinters but remains intact after Charlie and Cole ram it from the other side.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Jeez God, that hurt. You're
supposed to throw all your weight
into it!

COLE (O.S.)
All my weight is two ounces!

CHARLIE (O.S.)
OK, a running start this time.

Fast footsteps are heard, and then WHAM!! They break through and tumble into the tunnel. The pals stand up and dust off.

COLE
Grab your stuff, Katie.

CHARLIE
Abby, let's go.

Silence. They look ahead and see --

ABBY AND KATIE

-- laid out on the morgue-like slab of stone. Quiet and still. For once, Katie's cradled -- not squeezed -- by Abby's arms. Black translucent gas coils around their bodies like an anaconda.

Fear washes across the boys' faces.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Miner Foreman confronts Greylocke.

MINER FOREMAN
You don't really expect my men to
go back in there, do you?

MR. GREYLOCKE

No. I expect *my* men to go back in.
And that includes you.

He hurls a flimsy gas mask at the shocked Miner Foreman.

Polly and Ma Cooper come in for a landing, followed by
Randall who's out of breath.

Nicodemus hisses at the birds. He lunges for them, claws
unleashed, but instead --

THWACK!

-- he smashes into the side of an arriving car that cuts him
off from his prey. He's out like a light.

Doctor stops his car as Momma leaps out. Pop sits in back.

MOMMA HAGAN

Where's Charlie? Where's my Abby?!

Old Geezer looks around for them. Comes to a realization.

OLD GEEZER

I reckon I know where.

INT. COAL MINE - TUNNEL 15

Cole and Charlie hustle over to the sisters and shake them.

CHARLIE

Come on, Abby, wake up!

COLE

Snap out of it, Katie!

Nothing. They put their ears to the sisters' mouths.

COLE (cont'd)

I can't tell if she's breathing.
Let's get 'em outta here.

He straps his gas mask on Katie. Charlie straps his on Abby.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Frantic and emotional, Momma Hagan sprints toward the mine
but Miner Foreman holds her back.

MINER FOREMAN

Easy now, Misses Hagan. We'll get them out. And their birds.

Ma Cooper turns white with proof of her kids' whereabouts.

Momma Hagan calms when she sees miners prep to go back in. Greylocke smiles.

MR. GREYLOCKE

Yes. Go back in to work finally.

MINER FOREMAN

We're not going for you.

He stares daggers through Greylocke. As does Momma.

MOMMA HAGAN

This is all your fault. Children and canaries shouldn't be in a mine to begin with!

MR. GREYLOCKE

Your son knew the deal when he took the job and so did you. It's not personal, Misses Hagan. It's business.

MOMMA HAGAN

Then you're in the wrong business, Mister Greylocke!

She kicks him in the shin. Ma Cooper bites his other shin.

MR. GREYLOCKE

AHHHHHHH!!

INT. COAL MINE - MAIN TUNNEL

Charlie and Cole push the mine cart uphill past TUNNEL 8... TUNNEL 7... Their sisters lay unconscious in the cart. Cole rubs his drowsy eyes.

Abby awakens. She stretches like normal.

ABBY

What's for breakfast? I'm hun --

She notices her gas mask and Katie passed out. What the... ?

CHARLIE

You're alive.

ABBY

Yeah. Where are we? Something wrong
with your bird?

Cole gets dizzy. Disoriented. He falls to the ground.
Charlie stops pushing and scoops him up.

CHARLIE

Abby, can you run?

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - BOTTOM LEVEL

Charlie and Abby run with their canaries in the palms of
their hands. They arrive at the elevator shaft only to
find -- no elevator.

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - TOP LEVEL

The elevator climbs to the top. Miners unload.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Hey, up there! Send down the lift!

Stocky Canary hears Charlie. The bird flutters in Miner
Foreman's face, directing him to Charlie's plight.

MINER FOREMAN

Send it down. Send it back down!

Lift Operator pulls down the lever. The last miners are
barely off the lift when it drops again.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

The last miners and canaries surface from the tunnel. Loved
ones embrace them. All families are reunited. Almost.

Welsh Miner and Welsh Canary find Charlie's and Cole's
mothers near Greylocke. They speak to them individually.

WELSH MINER

Your dwtty children are safe.

WELSH CANARY

They're bringing them up now in a
minute.

MR. GREYLOCKE

See? I told you they'd be safe.

The mothers give Greylocke the evil eye. Doctor approaches with Pop limping on crutches. Momma shares the good news.

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - BOTTOM LEVEL

Charlie gazes up at the descending elevator. He sees the angst on Abby's face. He comforts her with a smile.

CHARLIE
We'll be alright.

ABBY'S PALM

Katie begins to stir. Her eyes open. She looks over at --

CHARLIE'S PALM

COLE
Sis, you're OK. That's good...

Katie smiles, for once happy to see her brother.

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - MID-LEVEL

The plummeting elevator, swinging side to side and scouring stone as usual, suddenly scours too much.

SCRAAAAAAPE!

It gets stuck on a stony protrusion.

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - BOTTOM LEVEL

Abby's comfort vanishes. So does Charlie's.

CHARLIE'S PALM

Cole tries to maintain eye contact with Katie.

COLE
Tell Ma I'm... I'm... sorry for...

His eyes close. Sleep overtakes him.

KATIE
Cole?

One of Cole's yellow feathers gently drifts to the ground.

KATIE (cont'd)
Cole!

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - TOP LEVEL

Lift Operator eases the lever down, slowly lowering the metal cable. He hears ominous clanking sounds.

LIFT OPERATOR
Cable's curled itself up, breaking
off slate, but the lift ain't
moving. It's stuck good.

MINER FOREMAN
Then we unstick it.

Miner Foreman throttles the lever all the way, lowering cable at a dangerous rate.

LIFT OPERATOR
Stop! The motor's gonna burn out.
It's gonna --

Sparks. Friction. The pulley system grinds to a halt.

LIFT OPERATOR (cont'd)
-- burn out.

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - BOTTOM LEVEL

Falling gravel smashes on the bottom of the shaft, frightening the kids. They gaze up at the elevator.

It's not moving.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Ma Cooper and Momma Hagan smile as Welsh Canary and Welsh Miner exit the mine. This time the Welsh duo looks grim. The mothers' smiles fade.

INT. COAL MINE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - BOTTOM LEVEL

Cole breathes shallow breaths. And then he breathes none.

Katie tries to revive her brother. Charlie tries, but no luck. He coughs and slumps down next to his pal.

CHARLIE
Cole, hang on. You gotta hang on.
You're... you're my best friend.

Silence. Total and absolute. And then a flapping sound can be heard rumbling their way.

They glance behind them and see blackness swallow flickering wall lanterns. The sisters shudder, but not Charlie.

EXT. COAL MINE - ENTRANCE

Welsh Miner hears the rumbling from the tunnel.

WELSH MINER

Ych a fi, what is that noise?

Others hear it and gaze into the cave. Darkness engulfs the remaining lantern glow. The noise grows louder.

MR. GREYLOCKE

Sounds like... flapping.

Suddenly a tornado of bats erupts from the mine! Carried aloft by them are Charlie, Abby, Katie and Cole. The bats wear sunglasses.

BATS

- Lépjén. Make way.
- We come through.
- Move it or lose it.

Everyone crouches as the immigrant bats flap overhead.

Nicodemus, recovering from getting whacked by the car door, cowers behind equipment -- a literal scaredy cat.

The bats lower the pair of siblings to the ground.

BATS (cont'd)

- Sorry we take so long.
- Had to get proper eyewear.

CHARLIE

Thanks, fellas.

BAT LEADER

For your friend warning us of the Black Damp, it is least we can do.

The bats flap goodbye and fly off toward the dark forest.

BATS

- So this is what day look like?
- Overrated.
- Let's get some goulash.

BACK AT THE ENTRANCE

Adults encircle the kids. They part to let the Doctor in.

Doc removes Abby's mask. He pulls instruments from a medical bag and examines the Hagan siblings.

Doc removes Katie's tiny mask. He pulls tiny instruments from a tiny bag and inspects the Cooper siblings.

The parents watch nervously from the sides.

The Doctor finishes his evaluation. He smiles.

DOCTOR

They check out. All of them.

Miners and canaries rejoice! Families reunite.

ABBY AND MOMMA HAGAN

Momma hugs her girl tight. Too tight.

ABBY

Can't... breathe...

MOMMA HAGAN

I just like to squeeze!

KATIE AND MA COOPER

KATIE

I'm sorry I went into the mine. I was trying to find Cole.

MA COOPER

All that matters is you're safe.

CHARLIE AND THE HAGANS

Momma hugs Charlie. Pop musses up the boy's hair.

POP HAGAN

You done good, Charlie. Real good.

COLE AND MA COOPER

Ma embraces her son. She wipes a happy tear from her beak.

COLE

Sorry I ran away and stuff.

MA COOPER

I never should've doubted you. You were right. Right from the beginning you were right.

Cole's dumbfounded. Hearing this means a lot.

MA COOPER (cont'd)
Your Pa would be proud.

Hearing this means more.

MINE CART

Greylocke leans against the cart, impatiently tapping his foot. Coal ash from the cart stains his suit. He fumes.

MR. GREYLOCKE
OK, break time's over.

MOMMA HAGAN
Break time?! This was a tragedy.
People and birds almost died!

MR. GREYLOCKE
Almost. It was almost a tragedy.
(to miners)
Back to work or I'll dock your pay.

MINER FOREMAN
We can't go down there 'til the gas
is cleared up.

MR. GREYLOCKE
Then clear it up. Do whatever you
have to do to get back to work.

Miners grumble their dissatisfaction.

MR. GREYLOCKE (cont'd)
It's now four-thirty. If I don't
hear that factory whistle by four-
forty, then everyone's fired. End
of story.

He struts into his office and slams the door, followed by Nicodemus.

The miners' collective backbone dissolves. They kiss family goodbye and head toward the mine. Charlie blocks them.

CHARLIE
Don't give in. That's what he
wants. We need to strike!

JERK MINER
But he'll replace us with scabs.

CHARLIE

Scabs from where? Everyone in town
already works for him. He's
bluffing.

The boy springs up onto a barrel to best be seen.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

We work hard and we're proud of
what we do. We deserve better and
the only way to get it is to
strike!

Miners murmur amongst themselves. Cole whispers to Charlie.

COLE

Nice speech. Where'd you get it?

CHARLIE

A little bird told me.

Charlie writes STRIKE on a piece of cardboard, holds it
high, and addresses the miners.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Now who's with me?

Cole writes the bird equivalent of STRIKE on tiny cardboard,
holds it high, and stands next to Charlie.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Who's with us?

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE

Greylocke tries on one of the Salesman's diamond watches.
The time is 4:41. He peers out at the quiet factory whistle.

MR. GREYLOCKE

Marcy, why's it so quiet out there?

His deadpan Secretary pops her head in from the other room.

SECRETARY

It's the canaries, sir. They're
picketing.

MR. GREYLOCKE

...Excuse me?

EXT. BUSINESS OFFICE

Greylocke exits to a sight he's never seen:

Canaries everywhere. On trucks, roofs, phone wires. Not just miner canaries, but all we've come to know. They hold tiny strike signs alongside miners with their signs.

Cole's perched above everyone, defiantly holding his sign the highest. It's eerily quiet. The Birds meets Norma Rae.

MR. GREYLOCKE

What's going on here? Back to work!

No one budges.

MR. GREYLOCKE (cont'd)

Have it your way. You're all fired.

Still no one budges. Solidarity in silence. Greylocke slides into faux-sincerity mode, not unlike Silas.

MR. GREYLOCKE (cont'd)

I didn't want to worry you but truth is business is down. I'm just trying to make ends meet like y'all.

Strikers believe him. A sparkle catches Cole's eye. He pulls back Greylocke's sleeve to expose the diamond watch.

CHARLIE

That's how you make ends meet?

MR. GREYLOCKE

Oh no. This is just... a gift.

Salesman wheels his all-purpose display trunk out of the office, unaware of the situation.

SALESMAN

Mighty sparkly diamond-studded watch you bought, Mister Greylocke. Don't forget your receipt.

Greylocke sheepishly takes the receipt. The strikers stare daggers through him. Caught red-handed, Greylocke gives in.

MR. GREYLOCKE

Alright. What do you want?

POP HAGAN

Better pay. Shorter hours. No kids under the age of sixteen...

CHARLIE

...free licorice every morning,
black and red. Carbon Monoxide
detectors every forty feet...

Salesman perks up. He shuts the jewelry side of his trunk
and opens the gas detector side. A price tag unravels.

MR. GREYLOCKE

No. That's where I draw the line.

CHARLIE

OK. No licorice.

Russian Miner appears disappointed.

MR. GREYLOCKE

No detectors. The bird system
works.

CHARLIE

Not for the birds it doesn't. Why
you against using gas detectors?

MR. GREYLOCKE

I'm not against using them. I'm
against buying them. They're
costly.

Salesman hands over a second receipt.

SALESMAN

And don't forget your receipt for
the matching diamond-studded cat
collar. Mighty sparkly.

The strikers' eyes sear through Greylocke and Nicodemus. The
cat removes his diamond collar and runs away. Greylocke
sweats. He glances to the Salesman.

MR. GREYLOCKE

You take checks?

EXT. AVIARY - ONE DAY LATER

The Avian Bandstand stage has been moved to the lawn.
Canaries put on a whistlepalooza for miners and families.

They swing dance and croon songs like "Canary in a Coal
Mine" by The Police. A good time had by all.

AVIAN BANDSTAND STAGE - BACKSTAGE

Bobby sits outside the ladies' outhouse. An off-screen wing gives him a glossy of Polly.

INSERT - THE GLOSSY, which reads:

"To my #1 fan. Keep whistling!
Love, Polly."

BACK TO BOBBY

Before him are Polly and Randall (sans zoot suit) happily flipping their tails.

POLLY
No maps. No clues. Just an
autograph like you wanted.

Bobby's more serious than usual. More mature.

BOBBY
Please know it's with a heavy heart
I say this -- We're not meant to be
together. It's not you. It's me.

Bandstand Assistant exits the outhouse and coos at Bobby.

BOBBY (cont'd)
And her.

Polly's speechless. Randall chuckles.

AVIAN BANDSTAND STAGE - SIDE STAGE

Irish Canary Cops escort Silas to a paddy wagon. One reads him his rights. Cole accompanies them.

SILAS
You have no idea how to protect a
flock. All you did was weaken them.
They're too domesticated to survive
in the Wild. I did what was best
and I would do it again!

COLE
And you'd be wrong again.

Silas absorbs his defeat. Cole notices him notice an exit.

COLE (cont'd)
You're not thinking of escaping,
are you?

SILAS

Nooooo.

Beat. Silas breaks loose and soars toward the exit.

SMACK!

He flies head first into a glass window. Cops arrest him.
Janitor slaps a sticker on the glass. Happens all the time.

EXT./INT. SCRANTON - ONE WEEK LATER

MONTAGE - MINERS ADOPT CANARIES AS SNOW MELTS

-- Miners replace bird cages with gas detectors in the mine.

-- Old Geezer empties the Aviary, giving each bird to their
respective miner. He's lonely until he sees Old Canary.

-- Miners bring their adopted canaries home.

-- Russian Canary plays with Russian Miner's kids.

-- Momma Hagan cooks supper for her family. Ma Cooper
regurgitates supper for hers (seriously).

END MONTAGE

The city feels a bit more colorful. A bit more hopeful.

EXT. SCRANTON - ONE MONTH LATER

The springtime sun rises over the Appalachians, warming the
miners who walk to work.

EXT. HAGAN HOUSE

Charlie sits on the porch, polishing his miner helmet. Cole
tests the lamp. It's good to go.

Pop Hagan exits the house with a cane, but no more crutches.
Charlie hands him the helmet.

POP HAGAN

Attaboys, Char-Cole. Stay outta
trouble now.

He affectionately musses up his son's hair, and Cole's
feathers, before leaving for the mine.

Charlie pulls out black and red licorice. He gives black to Cole. They mosey on down the road -- the boy walking, and the bird, now with full flight feathers, hovering.

CHARLIE

So what do you wanna play --
Hopscotch? Hide 'n' Seek? Marbles?

COLE

We got all day. Let's play 'em all.

CHARLIE

Deal.

Content, Cole whistles "Rhapsody in Blue". He's no better than before. Charlie stuffs licorice in his pal's beak.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

But no singing.

FADE TO YELLOW.

THE END