

MOUSE HUNT

b y
Adam Rifkin

January 22, 1996

BLACK

Church organ music.

FADE IN:

INT. ST. BARTHOLEMEW'S CHURCH - DAY

High baroque ceilings. Spectacular stained glass windows. Rows and rows of pews. Most empty, except for the first couple. A funeral is in progress. An OLD MAN rests in an open casket. The PRIEST eulogizes to the small GATHERING.

PRIEST

...And so we lay to rest our brave little soldier, our funny friend with the crooked smile, who came to America alone as a boy with nothing but a pocketful of dreams...dreams of someday becoming a world renowned brain surgeon. Well, Rudolph Smuntz didn't quite make that dream come true, instead he opened a little string factory. After all, everyone needs string at one time or another, he always said. It didn't make him rich, but it made him proud.

Several MOURNERS pat tears and wipe noses.

PRIEST

Also filling Rudolph with pride were his two fine sons, both healthy, both strong. His first born, Lars...

CAMERA FINDS LARS SMUNTZ sitting in the front pew. Mid-30's and stiff, Lars is good at keeping his emotions inside. Control is his middle name. His wife APRIL sits next to him. She is more liberal with her sadness.

PRIEST

Two years later, another blessing, Ernst, or Ernie, as we all know him by.

CAMERA PANS to ERNIE SMUNTZ, early 30's and a little less square than his brother. Ernie lives life off the cuff and is more free with his emotions. He breaks down and blows his nose into a hanky.

ERNIE

(blurts out)

I love you, pop.

Lars shoots him a glare.

EXT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW CHURCH - DAY

The massive cathedral stands amid the Boston coastline. An overcast sky befits the occasion. Arched, carved wooden doors open like angel wings. A hearse waits by the curb many, many concrete steps below.

Ceremoniously, the Priest, MUMBLING a prayer in Latin, leads the coffin, six PALLBEARERS, and mourners down the steep stairs. Lars and Ernie, the two front pallbearers, speak quietly to each other.

LARS

Pop left both of us the factory, fifty/fifty. Looks like you're in the string business, brother.

ERNIE

Keep dreaming. You can have it all. I want nothing to do with string.

LARS

But Pop's counting on us.

ERNIE

You gotta stop letting that guilt get the better of you. Get out in the world. You been working with pop since you were sixteen...Why don't you sell the damn place already. It's not like it's making any money.

LARS

(thoughtful)

Yeah, maybe you're right.

Suddenly, Lars' brass casket handle breaks off in his hand. The casket drops to one side throwing everyone off balance. The heavy coffin breaks free of their grasps and slides like a sled down the long stone steps.

LARS

Oh, my God! I didn't mean it, pop!

The runaway casket flies toward the street. The Priest dives for cover. Lars, Ernie, and the other mourners race down the stairs after the speeding coffin.

AT THE CURB

The coffin SLAMS into the side of the hearse with tremendous force. The impact pops the lid open and catapults Rudolph Smuntz into the air. The corpse soars over the top of the hearse and does a perfect full-gaynor with a twist.

Everybody watches in horror as the body disappears headfirst into an open manhole. Two CITY SEWER WORKERS can't believe their eyes.

INT. SEWER - DAY

SPLASH! Rudolph's body is carried by the rushing water current down the sewer pipe and around a bend. Gone.

The open manhole suddenly fills with faces looking down in disbelief.

ERNIE

POP!

Lars turns to one of the city workers.

LARS

Quick, get him out of there!

WORKER

He's half-way to the harbor by now, bub.

EXT. BOSTON HARBOR - NIGHT

Searchlights scan the black harbor. Two Coast Guard boats circle a large area. A DIVER pops out of the water with Rudolph Smuntz's bloated corpse over his shoulder. All the spotlights immediately hit the rescuer as the body is pulled onto the deck. ANOTHER COAST GUARD WORKER SHOUTS into a megaphone toward the dock.

COAST GUARD WORKER

We got him!

EXT. DOCK - NIGHT/CONTINUOUS

Lars, Ernie, the Priest, and a few mourners are gathered. They see Rudolph's body being hoisted from the water.

LARS

Finally.

ERNIE

I told you we should've gotten him cremated.

EXT. SMUNTZ STRING FACTORY - DAY

A small, brick building sandwiched between giant state-of-the-art industrial facilities. This little decrepit operation looks out of place amid such progress. A big faded sign reads, SMUNTZ STRING.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A BRASS URN

The final resting place of Rudolph Smuntz sits on a little shelf with small framed photographs of the Smuntz family surrounding it. We PULL BACK to reveal, we are...

INT. LARS' OFFICE - DAY

The cramped space is a relic from the past. Cluttered and dusty. The phone is a rotary-style. Lars sits behind his desk wading through a mountain of bills. Frustrated, he goes through each statement shaking his head. How will he pay?

Behind him is a window that overlooks the inner-workings of the factory below. He stops on a bill. It's pink.

LARS

Final notice? Oh, Jesus...

His eye finds an old black & white photo on the wall. A young Rudolph Smuntz standing in front of his new string factory. Six year old Lars and four year old Ernie stand on either side of him. The factory sits alone amid vacant lots.

LARS

(to urn)

What should I do, pop? What should I do?

Lars' secretary, MRS. DOUGAL, an old, white-haired lady with thick ankles, shuffles in. She's obviously been there since opening day.

MRS. DOUGAL

Lars, those gentlemen are here again.

Lars peeks out the window. Three MEN IN SUITS stand on the production floor below. He jumps up, brushes himself off, and fixes his hair.

LARS

Thank you, Mrs. Dougal.

INT. SMUNTZ STRING FACTORY - DAY

So this is how they make string. Out-of-date equipment CHUGS, spins, cuts, and ties. Conveyor belts and pulleys keep things moving. The small WORK STAFF make sure everything's oiled and running. They all look like they've been here since day one.

Lars walks with the three fast-talking suits through the production area.

SUIT #1

...Haven't seen equipment like this since we came back from China.

LARS

Well, our machinery might be old, but it still works. My father always said, if it ain't broke, why fix it.

SUIT #2

Very quaint, but in today's world if that were the general consensus, we'd all still be playing pong.

LARS

Well, I do intend to modernize things a little bit. I mean, we're still sending messages back and forth through suction ducts. I want to put in a nice intercom system.

SUIT #1

Ever heard of computers?

LARS

Well, sure, everybody's heard of com...

SUIT #2

Today everything's automated by computers. If you ever expect to compete on a level playing field, you have to do a lot more than add an intercom system.

SUIT #1

You have to upgrade to the twentieth century. And that takes green. This place is like something out of a George Orwell novel.

SUIT #2

How do you intend to upgrade to a global level if you can't even pay your phone bill?

LARS

How do you know about that?

SUIT #1

Look, Mr. Smuntz, we at Zepco String and Twine Industries, in cooperation with our parent company, Consolidated Zepco Rope, Incorporated, are making you our final offer.

SUIT #2

We're willing to buy you out on a cash and stock option basis. Completely renovate and modernize you into the twenty-first century. And we're willing to keep you on as a string consultant

SUIT #2 (cont'd)
complete with our health and pension
benefits. What do you say?

Lars stops in his tracks. Sounds enticing.

LARS
Will you keep the name Smuntz String?

The three suits huddle. They WHISPER back and forth.

SUIT #1
No.

SUIT #2
But you'll be a part of the Zepco string,
twine, and rope family.

Lars stuffs his hands in his pockets, befuddled. What to do?

LARS
(tortured)
God, it sounds so tempting. Can I think
about it?

SUIT #1
We've given you ample time. I'm sorry,
but we need your answer immediately.

SUIT #2
We're nearing the end of our fiscal year.

Lars paces back and forth. Nodding his head, the idea is
sounding better and better. The three suits all look at each
other and subtly smile and nod. They got him. Lars is overcome
with a decision.

LARS
Okay! I'll...

Lars pulls his hands out of his pockets. He holds a little,
dirty piece of frayed string in one palm. He stares at it. His
expression instantly changes. A look of melancholy. The three
suits are confused.

Gazing at the little piece of string, Lars' thoughts become
readable to us. We MOVE IN CLOSE on his face as Lars is taken
back to a day not that long ago.

WAVY DISSOLVE INTO FLASHBACK:

INT. RUDOLPH SMUNTZ'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT/FLASHBACK

The small, dark room is filled with IV's, monitors, and
breathing contraptions. A frail, old RUDOLPH SMUNTZ WHEEZES
from the bed. Lars stands beside him holding his hand.

LARS

You're gonna be all right, pop. You're gonna be all right.

RUDOLPH

Lars, I want you to have something.

LARS

What is it?

RUDOLPH

My most prized possession.

Rudolph holds up the little, frayed, dirty piece of string.
Lars feigns enthusiasm.

LARS

Ah, a piece of string.

RUDOLPH

Not any piece of string. I found it on my first day in America. From that moment on, I knew my destiny. String. String. It's been in my pocket for sixty years. Here. Share it with your brother. Maybe it will bring you two closer together. You never seem to talk anymore.

Lars takes it.

LARS

Thanks, pop.

RUDOLPH

Promise me one thing, Lars.

LARS

Anything.

RUDOLPH

Promise me that you'll never sell Smuntz String to one of those big string corporations. Promise me you'll keep it in the family.

LARS

I promise, pop. I promise.

As Rudolph goes into a COUGHING FIT, we...

WAVY DISSOLVE BACK TO SCENE:

INT. SMUNTZ STRING FACTORY - DAY

Lars stares at the little string. The three suits wait.

SUIT #1
Okay, you'll...?

Lars' shoulders drop.

LARS
I'll...have to pass.

The suits look at each other stupefied.

SUIT #2
You're making a big mistake, Mr. Smuntz.

LARS
Could be. I'm sorry.

Lars turns and walks away leaving the three suits standing miffed.

CUT TO:

CU ON APRIL SMUNTZ'S FURIOUS FACE

APRIL
YOU WHAT!?

FAST PULL BACK to reveal we are...

INT. LARS' AND APRIL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A modest home. Lars and April stand in the pantry. She is livid.

LARS
But April, honey, you don't understand.
I promised him.

APRIL
Well, you promised me some things, too.
A better life, security, a baby. What
about those promises?

LARS
We'll have all those things once I turn
Smuntz String around. I got a lot of big
ideas.

APRIL
Turn it around? And how do you plan to
do that?

9.

LARS
I thought I'd take our savings and put
them into the business. Upgrade a little
into the twenty-first century. You know,
computers.

APRIL
Have you lost your mind? That little bit
of savings is all we've got. You are not
touching that money. I refuse to sit
back and watch you throw good money after
bad.

LARS
Hey, half of those savings are mine...
April, sweetheart, with my passion and
ambition and your support, I promise you
you'll be proud to be a part of Smuntz
String.

April bursts into tears.

APRIL
String! String! All you talk about is
string! There's more to life than just
string!

CUT TO:

EXT. LARS' AND APRIL'S HOME - NIGHT

SLAM! Lars stands on the front stoop of his little bungalow,
which is decorated with Christmas lights. A suitcase in each
hand. The front door ECHOES closed behind him. It locks. He
ain't gettin' let back in. It's cold and starts to snow as he
sulks over to his green Ford Bronco. He throws in his bags and
solemnly drives away.

CUT TO:

BRIGHT LIGHTS. MEDIA CAMERAS. REPORTERS. FLASHBULBS.

LESTER DINKUS, a field reporter from the local news stands up
INTO FRAME and talks directly into the CAMERA.

LESTER DINKUS
Thanks, Wendy. Lester Dinkus coming to
you live from Boston's favorite fish
restaurant, O'Satchmo's, where local
celebs have turned out, not only for a
5-star meal, but for Mayor Kip
McKrinkle's re-election announcement.

We PULL OUT to reveal we are...

INT. O'SATCHMO'S - NIGHT

The fancy harbor eatery is a flurry of media hype and excited CUSTOMERS. MAYOR KIP MCKRINKLE, a girthy man with a huge-mouthed smile, sits at a large table wearing an O'Satchmo's lobster bib. The Mayor's WIFE, TWIN TEEN DAUGHTERS, and other local BIGWIGS sit with him. A dozen microphones are aimed at the rotund mayor.

Lester makes his way to his honor still reporting live.

LESTER DINKUS

Acclaimed Chef Ernie Smuntz will be serving his famous lobster loaf, a dish which has made O'Satchmo's renowned

Lester thrusts the microphone in the Mayor's face.

LESTER DINKUS

Mr. Mayor, you said at your last inaugural that this would be your final term as Mayor. Why the change of heart?

MAYOR MCKRINKLE

I'll answer all your questions after we eat. I'm starving. Where's O'Satchmo? Where's my buddy O'Satchmo?

Just then DWIGHT O'SATCHMO comes out of the kitchen and waves to his guests. Everyone APPLAUDS. O'Satchmo is a 40+ year old black man with bright red curly hair.

LESTER DINKUS

Owner of O'Satchmo's...Dwight O'Satchmo waving to the crowd.

O'Satchmo and Mayor McKrinkle hug.

O'SATCHMO

Mr. Mayor, in honor of your re-election announcement...

O'Satchmo gestures to the kitchen. Ernie, decked in full chef regalia, comes out with a platter of food fit for a king.

EVERYBODY

Ooooo! Aaahhhh!

Ernie makes his way to the Mayor as Lester continues his live feed.

LESTER DINKUS

I wish you could smell this in the studio, Wendy. Positively delicious.

Ernie serves the lobster loaf, and with flare and dignity ladles on the sauce.

ERNIE

Mr. Mayor, please enjoy.

Ernie stands next to O'Satchmo. He glances at a PRETTY GIRL in the crowd. She smiles at him. He winks back cocky. Ernie and O'Satchmo look on proudly as Mayor McKrinkle takes a hearty bite.

MAYOR MCKRINKLE

Mmmmmmm!

Everybody APPLAUDS. As the Mayor chews, his brow furrows slightly.

MAYOR MCKRINKLE

(to Ernie)

Hhmm, you added almonds, didn't you?

ERNIE

Almonds?

MAYOR MCKRINKLE

Something's very crunchy.

BECKY, one of the Mayor's daughters, blurts out.

BECKY

Eeww! Look!

All eyes turn as Becky reaches onto her father's plate. She pulls the back half of a large cockroach out of the sauce. The four remaining legs twitch.

BECKY

Half a cockroach!

Everybody freezes. Silence. Mayor McKrinkle is catatonic with a plaster smile. He goes white.

BECKY

Daddy, you ate the head!

Suddenly, Mayor McKrinkle projectile vomits across the entire restaurant. Puke pumps out of him like a well. A glob of barf hits Lester in the face. Lester uncontrollably hurls. A patch splats in the twins' laps. Both twins ralph in unison. A chain reaction begins.

In no time everyone in the joint is heaving their guts out. Ernie and O'Satchmo watch in horror as arcs of bile spew

everywhere, all being captured on live TV. Ernie feebly tries to smile at the same pretty girl he winked at. She looks at him and throws up. O'Satchmo turns slowly and glares daggers at Ernie, then leaps on Ernie, strangling him.

CUT TO:

CU OF TELEVISION SCREEN

The Mayor's initial barf is played in SLOW MOTION. A MONTAGE of the vomit-fest is cut together to NEWS THEME MUSIC. The local news begins. Desk anchor, WENDY SAPERSTEIN, reports. The set is decorated for Christmas.

WENDY

And that was the awful scene just two weeks ago at what was intended to be Mayor McKrinkle's re-election kick-off. Good evening, I'm Wendy Saperstein, and this is News at Nine. Tonight on Christmas Eve we go live to field reporter, Lester Dinkus, who was in the thick of the stew, so to speak, for an update on the story that has captivated Boston for two weeks. Lester.

The news program CUTS TO Lester. He is outside a boarded-up O'Satchmo's.

LESTER

Thanks, Wendy. Words can never truly capture the horror of what transpired two weeks ago tonight. In a few brief moments, the joy of the holidays was shattered and the world changed for many people...

A news shot of the Mayor running away from reporters hiding his face with a jacket comes onto the screen.

LESTER

Mayor McKrinkle has resigned his office in embarrassment and shame. Eunice McKrinkle, the Mayor's wife, is seeking a divorce and has filed for sole custody of their twin daughters..

Video footage of O'Satchmo's windows being boarded-up plays. O'Satchmo is held back by FAMILY as he SCREAMS and CRIES.

LESTER

Once the hottest restaurant in Boston, O'Satchmo's has been condemned by the Health Department and is scheduled for demolition. O'Satchmo himself has fled the city.

As the news continues, WE PULL AWAY from the TV screen. The set plays in an upper corner of a restaurant for no one in particular. We are...

INT. RIMPY'S COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

This joint makes Denny's look like Spago. Their Christmas decorations have been recycled since the 1960's. Watching the news from the counter sits a dishevelled and depressed Lars. He's unenthused with his chicken fried steak.

ON THE TV SCREEN

A still photograph of Ernie in his chef's hat FILLS THE SCREEN.

LESTER

But the true villain in this tragedy is Ernie Smuntz. Ernie Smuntz, the once whiz-kid chef, acclaimed for his original lobster loaf...

Lester gags slightly.

LESTER

Sorry. Just the mention of it turns my stomach. At this time we have been unable to locate Mr. Smuntz for comment. Perhaps he's gone into hiding. Perhaps he's missing.

Lars looks up and sees his brother's face on television. He can't believe it.

LESTER

And, I'll tell you this, Wendy, most folks hope he stays missing, 'cause Bostonians don't like to eat cockroaches. He's ruined Christmas for a lot of people. This is Lester Dinkus live outside of what was once O'Satchmo's on a now bleak Christmas Eve. Back to you.

LARS

(under his breath)

Leave it to Ernie.

WENDY

And now for more on that incompetent chef, Ernie Smuntz, here is News at Nine's very own Ben Cromwell. Ben.

A slanderous story about Ernie plays on...Suddenly an overly made-up WAITRESS BLURTS OUT across the restaurant.

WAITRESS
Hey, Ernie's on TV.

All the WAITRESSES notice and call out.

ALL WAITRESSES
Ernie's a star/Yeah, Ernie/That's our
Ernie.

Lars is surprised. Why do all these waitresses know his brother? Suddenly the fry cook turns and leans across the heat lamps. It's Ernie with a moustache.

ERNIE
Could you all please shut-up. That's not
exactly my finest hour.

Ernie CLICKS off the TV with the remote.

WAITRESS
Aw, beans to you.

Lars can't believe it.

LARS
Ernie?

Ernie sees Lars. He suddenly becomes embarrassed.

ERNIE
Oh, great. What did you do, come here to
laugh at me?

LARS
I had no idea you were here? What the
hell happened?

ERNIE
You want to know what happened? I'll
tell you what happened.

Ernie takes off his apron and throws it down.

ERNIE
(calls out to manager)
I'm taking my break!

EXT. BOSTON STREET - NIGHT

A light snow falls. Lars and Ernie walk through the deserted, urban streets. Christmas decorations blink from everywhere.

LARS
God, that's tough. What a lousy break.

ERNIE

Tell me about it. And like it's my fault. That's what gets me. What am I, the Health Inspector or the Orkin man? No, I just cook the food. I didn't see it crawl in there.

LARS

Well, you know politics. They always need a scapegoat. I'm really sorry.

ERNIE

Listen, my deal will eventually blow over. You lost your marriage. That's the worst.

LARS

Yeah, that's pretty bad. I don't think she'll ever talk to me again. I blew it.

ERNIE

Why didn't you just sell to Plumpo like I said?

LARS

Zepco.

ERNIE

Whatever. You coulda made some cash. Gotten out of debt. Started anew.

LARS

I just couldn't do it. I just couldn't do it to pop.

ERNIE

To pop? Pop's dead.

LARS

You know, Ernie, even though I was the one who worked with pop all these years, you were the one he was most proud of.

ERNIE

He wouldn't be proud of me today. Cockroach, the other white meat.

LARS

No, he respected you. You fought for what you wanted and you got there. Me, I just did what was expected. I still do. Trying to keep the string dream alive.

ERNIE

That's your problem. Can't you see, string was his dream, not yours...What is your dream anyway?

There's a long silence as they walk. Lars thinks.

LARS

I don't know.

ERNIE

What do you mean, you don't know?
Everybody has a dream. Mine is to be a
famous chef and own my own restaurant.
That little episode at O'Satchmo's set me
back a few paces, but it's still my
dream. You gotta have a dream.

Lars stops disturbed.

LARS

Ernie, I don't think I have a dream. I
spent my whole life working for pop's
dream and all this time just assumed it
was mine, too.

(distant)

I'm dreamless.

ERNIE

Don't get overly dramatic. You'll find
one.

The angelic sound of CHRISTMAS CAROLERS fills the air. Lars and
Ernie stop by a small cluster of TEENAGE SINGERS.

LARS

We're orphans, Ernie.

ERNIE

Are you just figuring this out?

LARS

It just hit me...You know what that
means?

ERNIE

We have to take up pickpocketing?

LARS

It means all we have is each other.

ERNIE

Are you going goo-goo on me?

LARS

Ernie, I'm serious. We've spent all
these past years estranged, and for what?
Now, we're all we have.

ERNIE

You're right. We're all we have...Jesus,
it's cold out here.

Ernie rubs his hands together to warm them. Lars has an idea.

LARS

Stay with me at my motel.

ERNIE

Are you sure that's such a good idea?

LARS

Of course. You can't keep living at that
youth hostile. Pretty soon they're gonna
figure out you're not a German exchange
student.

ERNIE

Keeping up that accent is giving me a
headache.

LARS

You see. It's perfect. I get kicked out
of my house. You get evicted from your
building. It's Christmas. Fate is at
hand here. It'll feel like we're
brothers again.

Ernie smiles.

ERNIE

Okay, but just for a few nights.

They awkwardly shake hands. Suddenly overcome, they hug.
CAMERA CRANES UP ABOVE the brothers' embrace. The Christmas
Carolers fill the air with song as the snow falls.

EXT. THE MINUTEMAN MOTEL - NIGHT

The cheap, strip motel is punished by a wicked snowstorm. The
neon light flickers half-broken. WIND HOWLS.

INT. LARS' MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The small room boasts colonial furnishings, a red plaid chair,
and a lamp with a stand fashioned from an old musket. Lars and
Ernie each sleep in a twin bed. Teeth CHATTERING.

The sleeping brothers shiver from the extreme cold. We can see
their breath. Ernie stirs.

ERNIE

(half-awake)

It's freezing in here.

Lars doesn't respond.

ERNIE
Lars. Wake up.

LARS
Hm...huh...what?

ERNIE
It's freezing in here.

LARS
Thanks for telling me.

ERNIE
Turn up the heat.

LARS
It's up full blast. Must be broken.
There's more blankets in the closet.

Ernie, chilled to the bone even in his long thermal underwear, hops out of bed. The instant his feet hit the floor, he slides across the entire length of the motel room at top speed.

ERNIE
Aaaahhhhh!

CRASH! Ernie flips over a table and pulls down a dresser in an attempt to stop his momentum. Lars bolts up in bed at the raucous. He throws on the light.

LARS
Ernie! What happened?

Lars jumps out of bed. His feet immediately start slipping and sliding in all directions out from under him.

The entire floor of the motel room is a four-inch thick sheet of ice.

Lars' feet slip banana peel-style into the air. THUD! He lands flat on his back and slides into Ernie.

ERNIE
Ow! What the hell's going on? You didn't tell me this place turned back into a hockey rink at midnight.

Lars peers into the open bathroom. The pipes under the sink are ruptured and a frozen waterfall has formed.

LARS
Damn pipes burst from the cold and flooded the place.

ERNIE
Beautiful.

LARS
We should get another room.

ERNIE
You should get another brain. Let's get
out of this hellhole. Where are my
shoes?

The brothers see two pairs of shoes frozen underneath the ice.
Just the tongues stick out.

LARS
That's it! I'm not paying.

Lars and Ernie attempt to stand. The ice is so slippery, this
becomes near impossible. Each time one almost gets up, the
other pulls him down. They skid, fall, slide, and scramble in
all directions.

Just as Lars and Ernie finally make it to their feet, Ernie
slips again and knocks into Lars. Lars falls onto his back and
slides helplessly across the room, disappearing under a bed.

LARS (OS)
(from under bed)
Ernie, Merry Christmas.

ERNIE
Merry Christmas, Lars.

LARS (OS)
Little brother, it's time we take control
of our lives. I got a radical idea which
just might make us a little cash, so I
can turn the string business around and
you can get closer to a downpayment on
that restaurant...But I can't do it
alone. You with me?

ERNIE
(turning blue)
Does it involve ice?

LARS (OS)
No.

ERNIE
I'm in.

LARS (OS)
Good. Now get me the hell out of here.

EXT. DILAPIDATED INNER-CITY HOUSE - DAY

The tiny, ramshackled shack stands abandoned in this rundown neighborhood. The roof is gone. The wood is rotted. A "FOR SALE" sign is displayed out front.

Lars and Ernie stand in the snow-covered yard thoroughly unimpressed with what they see. PEARL, a bright orange-jacketed Realtor rambles on about the home's positives. Her sculptured hairdo is way too high.

PEARL

The foundation is built on solid granite, so you don't have to worry about soil erosion. Structurally, the home is sound. I think any termite damage is just superficial. A little paint and some Raid should take care of that. I should inform you, although I'm not supposed to, that another couple is interested and will be making their final decision at four o'clock today.

LARS

There's no roof.

PEARL

You said you were looking to buy a fixer-upper.

ERNIE

You call this a fixer-upper? It's a completely start over.

LARS

We want to be able to live in it while we're fixing it up. That's the whole purpose.

PEARL

You didn't even look inside.

ERNIE

Inside? There is no inside. The inside is now outside. You keep showing us these bombed-out crack houses.

PEARL

Well, I don't know what you two expect for the measly downpayment you can afford. I can't believe two grown men couldn't pool together more money than you did. It's embarrassing.

LARS

We don't expect perfection, but what we'd like is a little house that needs a little work, that we can fix up and sell and make a nice little profit. Even if we fix this place up, it's still worth nothing. Look at this neighborhood. We're in Beirut.

PEARL

You don't have anymore money?

They shake their heads "no." Pearl thinks.

PEARL

Hmmm.

(an idea)

Hold on. There is a place...Na, wouldn't be right.

LARS

Well, what is it?

PEARL

It's way out in the country. You guys said you wanted to stay in the city.

LARS

We might be interested in the country.

ERNIE

We keep our minds very open.

PEARL

It's been on the market forever. Years. Way out in the middle of nowhere. Most people don't want to take the trip. I don't even mention it to buyers anymore.

LARS

Couldn't hurt to look.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The orange Lincoln Towne Car makes its way through the beautiful East Coast countryside. Virgin snow as far as the eye can see.

INT. TOWNE CAR - DAY

Pearl drives. Lars sits shotgun. Ernie in the back.

LARS

Beautiful countryside.

PEARL
Isn't it though.

Ernie looks at his watch. They've been driving a while.

ERNIE
(like a kid)
Are we there yet?

EXT. LINCOLN TOWNE CAR - DAY

As the orange vehicle takes a bend, we see a big, stately, Victorian-style house in the distance atop a small hill.

INT. LINCOLN TOWNE CAR - DAY

The brothers see the big house out the windshield as they get closer.

PEARL
Thar she blows!

ERNIE
Where? Behind that big house?

PEARL
Darling, it is that big house.

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

Beautiful architecture. Stained glass windows reflect a multitude of colors. Snowcapped pine trees dot the sprawling property. Although desperately in need of a paint job and new shutters, this house is nice.

Pearl, Lars, and Ernie walk up the steps to the carved, oak front door. Lars and Ernie are awed.

ERNIE
(whispers to Lars)
What is she, nuts? We'll never be able to afford this.

From the porch Lars looks down the hill at an iced-over pond below. It's bordered by powder-covered shrubbery. They all enter.

INT. VICTORIAN HOUSE FOYER - DAY

Marble floor. Curved staircase. High ceilings. Cobwebs fill every corner. Dirty sheets cover abandoned furniture. Wallpaper hangs off the walls. Lars and Ernie look around in disbelief.

PEARL

Well, what do you think, boys?

LARS

What's the catch?

PEARL

Catch?

LARS

Something's gotta be wrong here? You know what we can afford. This seems a tad out of our price range.

PEARL

It's a bank repo. First Interstate owns the property and is desperate to unload it. Every previous owner has abandoned it unexpectedly. It's just one of those strange things. But it's a beautiful house. Just look at the architecture.

ERNIE

There was a mass murder here, wasn't there? Or maybe it's sitting on an old Indian burial site? I mean, come on, why would people suddenly abandon a big house like this?

PEARL

Well, to be honest with you, the rumor is, it's haunted.

LARS

Haunted? Haunted how?

POV FROM ABOVE - Unbeknownst to the three, Lars, Ernie, and Pearl are being watched. We don't see by whom.

PEARL

Who's to say. Frankly, I don't believe in that stuff. Personally, I think that because the property's so isolated, people grow lonely and let their imaginations get away from them.

ERNIE

Yeah, you don't believe in ghosts or any of that crap, do you?

LARS

Of course, not. I just figured a deal like this is too good to be true.

PEARL

Oh, it's very true. A once in a lifetime deal. You fix this place up and you're bound to triple your investment in no time. Shall we look around, gentlemen?

As Pearl leads Lars and Ernie out of the foyer, the POV FROM ABOVE recedes quietly into the darkness of a hollow wall.

CUT TO:

SOLD!

The sticker is slapped across the FOR SALE sign in front of the big, Victorian home.

UPBEAT HOME IMPROVEMENT MONTAGE BEGINS

Sheets are pulled off antique furniture. Clouds of dust billow. Lars COUGHS.

Ernie and Lars balance on ladders as they scrape off old paint.

A brush is dunked in a bucket of paste. The brothers wallpaper the kitchen. Paste spills everywhere as sheets of print wallpaper are glued into place.

An electric sander smooths the hardwood floor of the large living room. Ernie steers the contraption. He sands right over Lars' shoes as Lars screws in a light bulb. His dark brown loafers are sanded through exposing Lars' toes.

Lars and Ernie struggle to carry a grandfather clock up the stairs. As they reach the top step, they almost drop it, but regrab hold in the nick of time. Whew, that was close!

Balancing on ladders again, the brothers paint the house with brushes and rollers.

They hammer up new shutters.

Lars spackles holes on a bedroom wall.

Ernie hammers missing banister spindles into place.

Lars shaves down a new door and readies it for its jam.

Ernie replaces an elbow joint under the kitchen sink.

The house is looking pretty nice. CAMERA MOVES THROUGH the charming home revealing its new facelift.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The cozy room boasts polished hardwood floors, comfortably worn furniture, a baby grand piano, and a fire roars in the fireplace. CAMERA DRIFTS INTO...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Everything sparkles. Pots and baskets hang from large ceiling beams. Wood cabinets and a table with captain's chairs give the room a homey feel. We MOVE TO...

INT. FOYER - DAY

The shiny marble floor and twinkling chandelier welcome guests with open arms. CAMERA MOVES UP the curved mahogany stairs, the grandfather clock overlooking the foyer below. We MOVE INTO the...

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

As we travel down the arched corridor, we catch glimpses into the bedrooms through open doors. Beds made. Well-decorated. Comfortable. CAMERA REACHES the end of the hall and heads up a second flight of stairs. More narrow. We pass through an open door and enter...

INT. ATTIC - DAY

The cluttered, dusty attic has yet to be renovated. Holes in the drywall. Loose floorboards. A naked bulb hangs from a knotted chord.

Lars and Ernie start sifting through the junk. Lars picks up a large box marked MOTHBALLS. He opens it. Moths flutter out. He sniffs the box filled with the white marbles.

LARS

(grimaces)

Uck! Smells like the mens' room at Candlestick Park.

ERNIE

We can use those in the cedar closet.

(looking around)

Where do we start? This place is a mess.

LARS

We just have the attic and the basement, and we're done. And no ghosts.

ERNIE

Yet.

Ernie LAUGHS ominously like a ghoul.

LARS

Shut up.

Lars picks up an old doll and throws it at Ernie. He ducks. The doll flies past Ernie and goes right through the wallpaper into blackness.

LARS

What the...?

Lars and Ernie approach the hole in the wall. Curious, they rip the wallpaper away revealing a hidden door jam. The old, rotten door left open into a tiny room.

ERNIE

Cool. A secret room.

Lars feels for a light switch. None. He points to the hanging bulb.

LARS

Shine that light in here.

Ernie does. Light reveals a storage closet. It's empty except for spider webs and several frayed paper cylinders tied with old, faded ribbon.

LARS

This room hasn't seen the light of day since Lincoln.

ERNIE

What do you see?

LARS

Nothing, just a bunch of rolled up posters.

ERNIE

Let's take a look.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - DINING ROOM TABLETOP

The large papers are unrolled. They're not posters, but blueprints, yellowed and very fragile.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

The baroque-style dinner table is littered with the blueprints. A chandelier hangs above. Lars and Ernie examine their find.

ERNIE

(disappointed)

Oh. Blueprints. I thought it might be something valuable.

LARS

These are the plans for this house.

(pointing)

Here's the living room. Here's the foyer. Here's where we are. Hey, look,

LARS (cont'd)
there used to be an outhouse in the
backyard.

ERNIE
An outhouse? I hope when the snow thaws
we don't find any old corn cobs.

LARS
Jesus, look at the date.

Lars points to the bottom corner where the blueprints have been
dated and signed.

ERNIE
Eighteen seventy-six. Hey, it's a
centennial house. That should get us a
few more bucks. It's patriotic.

LARS
(studies signature)
Architect, Charles Lyle LaRue. That name
sounds very familiar. Charles Lyle
LaRue. I know I've heard it before.

ERNIE
Just some dead architect.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - MIDDLE AGED MAN WITH A LARGE NOSE AND BALDING
HEAD SCREAMS DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA.

LARGE NOSED MAN
Charles Lyle LaRue! Charles Lyle LaRue!

QUICK PULL BACK to reveal we are standing...

INT. FOYER - DAY

The large nosed man is RONALD POOVES, an architectural
historian. He holds the blueprints in his shaking hands. He
can't contain himself. Lars and Ernie are taken aback.

RONALD POOVES
Oh my God! I can't believe it! The
missing LaRue! I'm actually standing in
the missing LaRue and it's practically in
our own backyard! Phone! PHONE!

Baffled, Lars and Ernie both point toward the phone. Ronald
runs to it and dials. The brothers watch open-mouthed as he
SCREAMS into the receiver.

RONALD POOVES
This is Ronald Pooves! Get me the
curator! Hurry!

Lars and Ernie look at each other dumbfounded.

LARS

(to Ernie)

I hope he doesn't have a stroke.

RONALD POOVES

Lemuel, Ronald, sit down! I'm standing
in the missing LaRue!...Lemuel?!

Lemuel?!

(to Lars and Ernie)

Oh, dear, I think he's fainted.

CUT TO:

INT. SMUNTZ HOME - DAY

The house is packed with PEOPLE, each studying, analyzing,
surveying, measuring.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Ronald gleefully studies the blueprints with a cluster of suited
MEN and WOMEN.

RONALD POOVES

Note the combination of French Provincial
and Rococo. Subtle enough not to clash,
yet so bold. True LaRue.

WOMAN

Marvelous.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Lars and Ernie stand speechless as countless assessors and
experts dash back and forth.

ERNIE

(whispers to Lars)

I bet we can get minimum, a couple
hundred grand profit outta this place
now.

ROXANNE, an attractive, early 40's, African-American woman,
approaches the brothers and hands them each her business card.
She's flanked by SEVERAL ASSOCIATES.

ROXANNE

Hi, Roxanne Atkins. I'm with
Architectural Digest. You gentlemen must
be flabbergasted?

LARS

(playing it off)

Oh, yeah, well, flabbergasted. And,
we're very pleased.

ERNIE

After all, the missing LaRue. Right?

Roxanne and her associates LAUGH.

ROXANNE

I'll say...We'd like to devote our Spring
issue to introducing the world to this
magnificent discovery. Would that be all
right?

LARS

Sure. Why not?

ROXANNE

Great. How's February 15th for the
shoot?

LARS

Fine.

ROXANNE

Excellent. My crew and I will be here
bright and early. We want the cover to
show the house at sunrise with that
beautiful morning light coming over the
gables.

ERNIE

Love it.

EXT. SMUNTZ HOME - DAY

The slew of architecture aficionados pile into their cars. Lars
and Ernie stand on the porch as Ronald shakes their hand.

RONALD POOVES

Congratulations, gentlemen, I can only
imagine what it must feel like to be you
at this moment. Please, one thing, don't
sell until the museum has an opportunity
to make an offer.

ERNIE

It's a deal.

LARS

Oh, Ronald, just so we're all in the same
ballpark, what kind of offer are you
thinking about?

RONALD POOVES

I shouldn't say, because I don't want to insult you, but I suppose we could start negotiating at around...ten million?

Lars and Ernie freeze. I mean, really freeze.

RONALD POOVES

But don't hold me to that. There's always room to haggle. Ta-ta.

Lars and Ernie can't move. Ronald rushes to his car. All the vehicles drive away.

The brothers are like mannequins. Then, stiff as boards they both fall backwards unconscious. THUD!

INT. FOYER - DAY

Lars and Ernie slowly shuffle into the entrance hall. They close the door and stand silently for a moment. Gaping grins widen across their faces. They both uncontrollably LAUGH, HOOT and HOLLER. They start square dancing out of giddy ecstasy.

POV FROM ABOVE

As the brothers jump around like idiots, they're being watched yet again.

ERNIE

We're rich! We're rich!

LARS

I can't believe it! We won the lottery! Stuff like this doesn't ever happen to people like us.

ERNIE

Women love rich guys. This is the answer to our prayers. Just imagine. Now I can open my own restaurant.

LARS

I'm gonna bring Smuntz String into the twenty-first century and woo April back.

ERNIE

Don't spoil it by mentioning string.

LARS

Are you kidding? This is all due to pop. He led us here. He's looking out for us.

ERNIE
 (screams up)
 Thank you, pop!

Lars and Ernie CHEER and SHOUT like loons. The POV FROM ABOVE ducks into the hollow wall.

INT. WALLS - DAY

We can still hear the brothers as the POV races through the inside of the walls. Over beams. Under electrical cabling. Dodging nails. We fly at top speed down through the wall and under the floor. Tiny shafts of light spear from the floor boards above.

The POV peeks out a tiny knot hidden at the base of the first stair of the foyer. LOOKING UP we see the brothers from a completely different vantage point. They look like giants.

LARS
 We gotta sell right away!

ERNIE
 No! We wait for the issue of Architectural Digest to come out.

LARS
 But, ten million dollars!

ERNIE
 Lars, listen, if we can get ten million dollars now before anyone knows it exists, imagine what we'll get when the magazine hits the stands. I overheard that guy from the Massachusetts Historical Preservation Society talk about the government making this whole area a national park.

LARS
 Really?

ERNIE
 We could get fifteen. Eighteen. Maybe twenty million dollars.

LARS
 (awed)
 Twenty million dollars. But Ernie, a bird in the hand...

ERNIE
 It's only getting more valuable with every passing minute. Why don't we kick back, relax and enjoy the winter in our missing LaRue.

LARS
Our missing LaRue.

The two brothers bust up LAUGHING and leave the foyer. The POV disappears back under the floor and into the blackness.

INT. LARS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lars sleeps soundly in his 4-poster bed. Nestled cozily under the covers, a smile grows across his face. He's dreaming.

An old 1920's recording of the song "We're in the Money" COMES UP as a THOUGHT CLOUD materializes over Lars' head. In it we see what he is dreaming.

LARS' THOUGHT CLOUD/DREAM

Fancy, big-city skyscraper reaching up to the clouds. CAMERA ZOOMS up the side of the building. Up. Up. Up. Hundreds of floors. As the CAMERA REACHES THE ROOF, a gigantic neon sign blinks SMUNTZ STRING.

CAMERA MOVES INTO the penthouse window.

IN THE PENTHOUSE

The biggest office you've ever seen. The windows overlook everything. Lars, dressed in a tuxedo and top hat, rests his feet on the desk. He lights his cigar with a hundred dollar bill. He looks at the bill.

CLOSE UP - HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL

Instead of Ben Franklin's face, Lars' face decorates the center of the cash. His green animated likeness lipsyncs the words to "We're in the Money" as it continues to play.

LARS ON \$100 BILL

"...We gotta lot of what it takes to get along."

The bill winks at Lars. Lars winks at the bill. He blows a smoke ring. It forms into the shape of a dollar sign. Lars jumps up and steps into the elevator in his office. The ELEVATOR OPERATOR tips his hat.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR

Going down, Mr. Smuntz?

The doors close and VOOOM, the elevator shoots down hundreds of floors in a second. DING. Lar steps out into the lobby and exits the fancy skyscraper.

OUTSIDE THE SKYSCRAPER Lars steps into a waiting 1920's-style stretch limo. The LIMO DRIVER tips his hat.

IN THE LIMO April sits dressed to the nines and dripping with diamonds everywhere.

APRIL

There's my big, handsome king of string.

She smothers him with kisses.

ON SLEEPING LARS

The limo in the thought bubble starts to drive away. The whole thought cloud with the limo inside drives out of Lars' bedroom and into the hall.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

The thought cloud with the limo in it floats down the corridor toward Ernie's bedroom.

INT. ERNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ernie sleeps soundly in his child-like room. Model airplanes hang from the ceiling. On a hobby table sits a half-finished biplane.

Hovering above Ernie's head is Ernie's own thought cloud. In it we see what Ernie's dreaming.

IN ERNIE'S THOUGHT CLOUD/DREAM

Ernie sits on the top of a mountain of gold coins. He's dressed like a sultan and wears a large crown. Five BIKINI-CLAD WOMEN surround him. Worship him. Kiss him. He throws gold coins in the air with jubilation.

ERNIE

I'm rich! I'm wealthy! Mine! All mine!

LARS' LIMO DREAM BUBBLE floats into the room and pulls up next to Ernie's sultan dream bubble. The limo BEEPS and Lars sticks his head out the sunroof, lipstick kisses all over his cheeks and forehead. The brothers SHOUT to each other from dream bubble to dream bubble.

LARS

Hey, Ernie! Wanna come with us for a ride?

ERNIE

Can't you see I'm busy.

LARS

Where's your restaurant? I thought owning a restaurant was your dream?

ERNIE

Hey, what I dream in the privacy of my own head is none of your business.

LARS

What are you, some kind of sultan? You look ridiculous in that genie suit.

ERNIE

Watch it.

INT. LARS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Lars sleeps MUMBLING inaudibles, a SCRATCHING SOUND comes from inside the wall. Lars stirs slightly. The SCRATCHING continues. Louder. Lars' eyes bolt open.

INT. ERNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The two dream bubbles float above Ernie's head. Suddenly, POP! Lars' dream bubble disappears. Ernie the sultan is startled. He looks around from his mountain top of coins.

ERNIE IN DREAM

BUBBLE

Where'd he go?

INT. LARS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lars sits up in bed worried. He listens for the mysterious noise. There it is again...SCRATCH, SCRATCH, SCRATCH. But where is it coming from? He looks around nervously, but sees nothing. Spooked, he disappears under the covers.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

The morning sun reflects off the snow. The large home stands stoic.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Ernie sits at the kitchen table with a newspaper and a cup of coffee. He's in his flannel pajamas. Unshaven, his hair's a mess.

Lars rushes into the room, showered, shaved, and in his suit. He doesn't want to be late for work.

ERNIE

Morning.

LARS

I got bad news. I think this place might really be haunted after all.

Lars pours himself a cup of java. Ernie looks Lars up and down.

ERNIE

Where you going?

LARS

Work. Didn't you hear me? I said I think this house is haunted. I heard something in the walls last night. This creepy scratching, like some ghost was imprisoned there and clawing to get out.

ERNIE

Work? What are you, nuts?

LARS

No. Why aren't you ready for work? You're gonna be late.

ERNIE

We're millionaires, or have you forgotten? I ain't setting foot in that greasy Rimpys again for the rest of my life.

LARS

We're not millionaires yet.

ERNIE

We might as well be.

LARS

How much money do you have in the bank?

ERNIE

Four dollars.

LARS

If you only have four dollars in the bank, then we're not gonna be able to pay our mortgage. And if we miss a mortgage payment, the bank repossesses the house. If the bank repossesses the house, they own it. And then we're not millionaires anymore. They are.

Ernie considers this for a moment.

ERNIE

I'll get dressed.

Lars reaches into the cabinet and pulls out a box of Cheerios. Before he knows it, cereal pours all over the floor from a hole in the bottom.

LARS

Oh, great!

CLOSE ON A MOUSE HOLE in a corner. From out of the blackness a twitching nose. Flittering whiskers. Two dark eyes. The face of a mouse peeks out.

MOUSE'S POV - As Cheerios rain onto the floor.

ON LARS as he holds up the box with the gnawed hole.

LARS

Damn. There's a hole in my cereal. I'm taking this box back...Hey, were you trying to get the toy out from the bottom?

ERNIE

There's no toy in Cheerios. Man, are you out of touch.

Just then Ernie sees movement out of the corner of his eye. The little mouse dashes out of the hole, runs along the baseboard, and starts shoving Cheerios into his cheeks.

ERNIE

(wide-eyed)

Uh-oh, don't move!

LARS

(scared)

What? What?

ERNIE

I think I see your ghost.

Lars looks down just as the mouse, cheeks filled with Cheerios, looks up. They make eye contact.

SNAP ZOOM IN on Lars' horrified face.

SNAP ZOOM IN on the mouse's startled expression.

Lars SCREAMS and leaps onto the counter.

LARS

Kill it!

The mouse makes a mad dash for the hole. Ernie chases after it with the rolled-up newspaper. He dives and WHACKS, but misses. The mouse disappears into the hole. SLAM! Ernie smashes headfirst into the baseboard.

ERNIE

Damn!

LARS

Uck! That's disgusting! Do you know what kind of diseases those things carry?

ERNIE

It's just a little field mouse.

LARS

Don't you know what they say, for every one you see, there's ten thousand more hidden in the walls.

Lars shivers at the thought.

ERNIE

That's cockroaches.

LARS

Well, you oughta know about cockroaches.

ERNIE

Watch it...I'll pick up a trap on my way home.

LARS

We gotta throw everything out in the cupboard.

ERNIE

Don't be ridiculous. So he ate a few Cheerios. A mouse isn't gonna kill anybody.

LARS

Oh yeah? Well, tell that to the millions who died from the Bubonic Plague. A disease that was spread by vermin.

Lars looks at his hands like they're infected and jumps to the sink. He starts to scrub.

INT. WALL - MORNING

Cheeks still packed with Cheerios, the mouse peeks out the hole at Lars and Ernie one last time before scurrying back into the depths of the house walls.

CAMERA FOLLOWS the mouse fast as he runs through the walls, past dust balls, over paint chips, and under cables. This subterranean labyrinth is the mouse's world. And a very elaborate world it is.

The mouse passes many of his various holes, cracks, and crevices. Each one an entryway into a different room of the house. The living room, the dining room, the upstairs corridors, are all seen through his little portholes.

INT. VENT - MORNING

Through a ceiling fan hole the mouse sees into the bedrooms. A light socket gives him a view into the bathroom. It is obvious this rodent has an all-access pass to every corner of the house. He jumps through a knot in a beam and disappears into blackness.

INT. LARS' OFFICE/STRING FACTORY - DAY

Lars is in a particularly animated mood. He goes through the bills WHISTLING "We're in the Money." The mountain of debt doesn't seem to phase him today. Then Lars is struck with an idea.

Stepping from his office onto a catwalk, which overlooks the production floor below, he grabs a megaphone off a hook.

INT. STRING FACTORY PRODUCTION AREA/CATWALK - DAY

Standing above all the workers, Lars SPEAKS into the bullhorn.

LARS

May I have your attention, please.
Attention, please.

Everybody stops working and looks up expecting the worst.

LARS

As of this spring, Smuntz String will be brought into the twenty-first century. We will be undergoing a massive renovation and installing computerized equipment.

ONE WORKER turns to ANOTHER pessimistically.

WORKER

Here it comes. We're all getting fired.

LARS

You were all very loyal to my father, and to myself, as well. And for that, I thank you. Therefore, this spring everyone can look forward to a fifty percent raise. Keep up the good work.

A stunned silence follows for a beat. Then, CHEERS. They can't believe their ears. The floor bursts into a round of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Lars waves to his workers and goes back into his office.

INT. LARS' OFFICE - DAY

Lars waltzes through the office with a spring in his step. Mrs. Dougal shuffles in concerned.

MRS. DOUGAL

Lars, are you okay?

Lars swings past Mrs. Dougal and takes her hands. He dances with her. She's confused.

LARS

Never better, Mrs. Dougal, never better.

MRS. DOUGAL

But Lars, where will you get the money?
We can't even pay our bills.

LARS

Don't worry, Mrs. Dougal. Our troubles
are over.

Lars dances to his jacket and throws it on.

LARS

And now if you'll excuse me, I have an
important lunch date. I'm going to get
my wife back.

Lars plants a big kiss on Mrs. Dougal's forehead and prances out of the office. Mrs. Dougal stands dumbfounded staring at the open door.

MRS. DOUGAL

That poor boy, he's gone totally mad.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - APRIL'S FACE

APRIL

Absolutely not!

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal we are...

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY

Lars and April are seated at a table for two in the crowded eatery. Lars can't believe what he's hearing.

LARS

But, but, but...we're gonna be rich.

APRIL

You don't get it, do you? It's not about
money, it's about compatibility. It's
about us.

LARS

You said, what about all those promises I
made, a better life, a baby. I can give
those to you now.

APRIL

Lars, I've done a lot of thinking these past weeks, and I've come to the realization that we have absolutely nothing in common.

LARS

Oh, come on, that's just not true. We have plenty in common.

APRIL

Oh, yeah, name one thing.

This perplexes Lars. He thinks.

LARS

Gimme a minute.

APRIL

You see. For the first time in my life, I feel happy. I look forward to the future. I feel free.

LARS

Well, if we get back together, you can feel all those things and be rich, too.

APRIL

Lars, I'm very happy for you, but all the money in the world can't buy me back. Say hi to Ernie and congratulations on your Mr. Magoo.

LARS

Missing LaRue.

She gets up and puts on her coat. He watches her exit the restaurant. Lars SIGHS.

INT. RIMPY'S MENS' ROOM - DAY

Ernie stands at a urinal PEEING. CLARK, a pimply-faced busboy, PISSES at the urinal next to him.

CLARK

Twenty million dollars? Yeah, and I'm gonna be President next week.

ERNIE

What? You don't believe me?

CLARK

(sarcastic)

Oh, yeah, I believe you.

ERNIE

Clark, it's true. And if you're lucky, maybe I'll hire you as a waiter at my restaurant. None of this busboy stuff.

CLARK

I'll hold my breath.

Clark zips up and exits the bathroom without washing his hands. Ernie SCREAMS after him.

ERNIE

Aren't you gonna wash your hands?
(disgusted to himself)
That's it! He's never working for me.

Ernie zips up and washes his hands in the sink. As he exits the bathroom he doesn't notice the piece of toilet paper stuck to his shoe. It flaps like a tail.

INT. RIMPY'S GRILL AREA - DAY

Over the counter and through the heat lamps Ernie sees the joint is crowded. He flips burgers, fries onion rings, mixes tuna salad, and stacks club sandwiches.

A WAITRESS plops a plate back under the heat lamps.

WAITRESS

Hey, millionaire, this bread was supposed to be toasted.

Ernie takes the food as the MANAGER slaps him on the back and LAUGHS facetiously.

MANAGER

Glad you could make it in today, Mr. money bags.

All the other WORKERS CHUCKLE. Ernie's annoyed.

ERNIE

Go ahead, laugh. I know you all think I'm full of shit. But you'll see who laughs last when I buy this dump and fire all of you.

The workers LAUGH harder.

WAITRESS

(sticking ticket to wheel)
Two turkey platters. One all white.
Where's my egg salad?

The manager CLAPS his hands.

MANAGER

All right, let's snap to. We got lunch
rush here.

The manager notices the toilet paper on Ernie's heel.

MANAGER

Hey, Daddy Warbucks, you got something
stuck to your shoe.

As Ernie juggles four different orders, he quickly snags the
t.p. off his heel and throws it at the big garbage can by the
sink. He runs his hands under the faucet.

Ernie doesn't see the grill's exhaust fan blow the tissue paper
out of the trash. The paper floats on a gust of air and lands
right on an open-faced egg salad sandwich.

Ernie turns. He quickly slaps a burger on a bun. Paints mayo
on a triple decker club. Ladles gravy on the turkey platters.
And plops a piece of toast on top of the egg salad. The plates
of food all hit the counter. DING.

ERNIE

Order up!

Two waitresses grab the food and deliver their orders.

ON TWO ELDERLY WOMEN AT THE COUNTER

Their sandwiches are served.

WAITRESS

There you go, ladies.

ELDERLY WOMAN 1

Thank you, dear.

(to woman 2)

The food here has gotten much better in
recent weeks. Have you noticed?

ELDERLY WOMAN 2

It must be that new cook.

Elderly woman 1 takes a hearty bite of her egg salad sandwich.
As she pulls it away from her mouth, a long strand of white
paper connects the sandwich to her lips. Confused, she pulls
the rest of it out of her food and holds it up.

ELDERLY WOMAN 1

What in heaven!?

ELDERLY WOMAN 2

Oh my God, there's toilet paper in your
food!

Elderly woman 1 goes white. Elderly woman 2 SCREAMS across the restaurant.

ELDERLY WOMAN 2

There's toilet paper in her egg salad!

All eyes turn to the two women and freeze. The manager shoots a look to Ernie. Ernie's eyes go wide. He shrugs. A CUSTOMER SCREAMS back.

CUSTOMER

Was it used?

Elderly woman 1 leans over the counter and ROOOAAAGGGHHH! We don't see the puke this time, we just hear it. Elderly woman 2 can't help herself. She ducks behind the other side of the counter and heaves. A chain reaction begins.

CLOSE ON ERNIE'S HORRIFIED FACE

He watches mortified as we hear the entire restaurant erupt into communal PUKING. The sounds are disgusting.

ERNIE

(to himself)

Not again.

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE UP - A tiny wedge of cheese is placed on a set mouse trap. SNAP. The mousetrap slams on a thumb. QUICK PULL OUT to reveal we are...

INT. SMUNTZ KITCHEN - NIGHT

LARS

OOOOWWWW!

Lars shakes the trap off his hand and jumps around clutching his thumb.

ERNIE

Lemme do it.

Ernie grabs the trap. He looks around.

ERNIE

Where's that cheese?

They search for it. It's nowhere. Lars cuts another wedge from a larger wheel of Swiss.

LARS

We'll find it later. Here.

Ernie carefully sets the trap again.

MOUSE POV FROM ABOVE

As Ernie and Lars struggle with the trap, our mouse watches from the top of the refrigerator while nibbling on the lost piece of cheese. His eye ZOOMS IN on the cheese in the trap, then moves to the larger wheel of Swiss on the counter.

His little pink tongue swathes across his lips with a SLURPING SOUND. Yummy.

LARS
Careful. Careful.

ERNIE
Don't touch me, you'll snap it.

ON LARS AND ERNIE

LARS
First thing Monday morning you're finding another job.

ERNIE
I know. I know. Let me concentrate.

LARS
I'm serious. We have to be responsible about this till our ship comes in.

ERNIE
Lars, it's humiliating enough being fired a second time for inducing mass vomiting. I don't need my big brother scolding me.

LARS
Sorry.
(beat)
Was it one ply or two?

ERNIE
Shut-up.

SNAP! The trap snags Ernie's index finger. The little piece of cheese goes flying.

ERNIE
Shit, now look what you made me do!

Ernie pulls the trap off his hand. It hurts. Just then, Lars sees the mouse run across the floor and grab the little piece of cheese.

LARS

Ernie!

Ernie looks. The mouse makes a run for it.

ERNIE

Don't let him get away!

LARS

Me?

Thinking fast, Ernie grabs a broom. He swings. Misses the mouse, but knocks a bunch of pots loose from their hooks. They CLANG down on Lars' head.

The mouse zigzags looking for cover. He runs past Lars.

ERNIE

Quick!

Lars grabs one of the pots. He and Ernie chase the mouse. The mouse races for his hole, the one he ran in before. Ernie swings the broom wildly. He knocks Lars in the shins.

LARS

OW!

Lars drops to his knees. He lunges at the mouse with the pot. The mouse ducks into the hole in the nick of time, just as Lars falls flat on his face. Ernie swings the broom and hits Lars in the back of the head.

ERNIE

Did we get him?

Angry, Lars BANGS the pot on Ernie's foot.

ERNIE

OW!

Ernie drops to his knees. The two brothers scramble on the floor, pushing each other out of the way to get a peek into the hole.

ERNIE

Lemme see. Lemme see.

LARS

Move.

INT. WALL - CONTINUOUS

We see Lars' giant eye looking in. Then, Ernie's giant eye. The broom handle is poked in and jabbed around.

ERNIE (OS)
Maybe this'll get him.

INT. SMUNTZ KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A WIDE VIEW of the kitchen sees the two brothers on their hands and knees from the rear. In the F.G. on the counter sits the large wheel of Swiss cheese.

Lars and Ernie are so consumed with the mouse hole, they fail to see the mouse reappear on the counter and struggle to push the wheel of Swiss across the formica and OUT OF FRAME.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LARS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lars sleeps restlessly. Sweat beads his brow.

INT. ERNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ernie tosses and turns. Unsettling dreams.

INT. SMUNTZ KITCHEN - NIGHT

The pantry is quiet. Dark.

ON MOUSE HOLE

The mousetrap sits several inches from the opening. Spring loaded and ready to snap. No cheese in it this time. Poised on the trigger sits an olive.

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

The historic home is bathed in lunar blue light. The almost full moon hangs high. An eerie stillness permeates. Then...

SNAP! The sound echoes from the house.

INT. LARS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lars bolts awake at the sound. Realizing what it is, he settles back to sleep. This time calmer. He smiles as he drifts off.

INT. ERNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ernie, awakened from the sound, looks around.

ERNIE
Rest in peace, little varmint.

Ernie goes back to sleep smiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMUNTZ KITCHEN - DAY

Sun floods through the windows. Near the mouse hole lies the spent trap. It's upside down.

From around the kitchen entrance door, Lars and Ernie, still in their pajamas, cautiously peer in. They see the overturned trap.

LARS

He's under there.

ERNIE

Go get it.

LARS

Me? Are you crazy? You do it.

ERNIE

What if he's not dead? What if the second I touch the trap he starts kicking and writhing in pain?

LARS

He's dead. You felt how hard that thing snaps, and we're big.

Ernie grabs the broom and creeps toward the trap. Lars follows close behind. The suspense is killing him.

With the broom handle, Ernie reaches far in front of him. He takes a deep breath and flips the trap. Both brothers jump. Upon closer examination...nothing. The trap is empty. The olive is gone.

LARS

Where'd he go?

ERNIE

Maybe it snapped by itself.

Lars sees something. Something small and dark.

LARS

I don't think so. Look.

Ernie and Lars crouch down. There, by the hole on the floor is the olive pit. Ernie picks it up.

ERNIE

I don't believe it.

LARS

That little jerk snapped the trap and ate the olive, and left the pit just to mock us.

ERNIE

Lars, you're giving a rodent too much credit. Mice don't mock people. The trap snapped itself. The olive flew across the floor and he ate it. At least we know now he likes olives.

LARS

He's got a whole smorgasbord in there...Cheerios, cheese, olives, next thing he'll want martinis.

(sighs)

Come on, let's get dressed. We still have a lot of work to do on this place.

As the brothers leave the kitchen, CAMERA TILTS UP to one of the baskets hanging from the ceiling beam that was right over their heads. In it reclines the mouse, paws behind his head like he's resting in a hammock. Half the olive sits next to him.

Grabbing the olive in his jaws, the little rodent hops to his feet and leaps from the basket. He soars several feet through the air and lands in a hanging frying pan. He jumps from the pan and grabs hold of a dangling bunch of garlic cloves in mid-air.

He swings from garlic cloves to dried pepper swags like Tarzan. He dives toward the counter. Lands on the top of a bunch of bananas and skis down one. Does a somersault in midair, springs off a loaf of wheat bread, and disappears into a knothole in the paneled wall. Bull's-eye.

INT. LARS' BATHROOM - MORNING

Lars brushes his teeth. Holding the tooth brush between his pearly whites, he opens the medicine cabinet. To his shock on the shelf between the aspirin and the deodorant sits the mouse.

Lars SCREAMS. The mouse leaps from the cabinet. Lars swings at him. Misses. Everything in the medicine cabinet comes crashing down into the sink.

The mouse ducks behind the toilet. Lars lunges for him. He slips and hits his head on the toilet bowl. His face goes in the water. The mouse leaps onto the handle flushing the toilet, then disappears into a crack between the tiles.

Lars, soaked, sits up, his tooth brush flushed down the bowl.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

The top floor is taking shape. Ernie paints the walls and ceiling, while Lars tries to rewire a light fixture.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

The dingy, underbelly of the ancient home hasn't been renovated since it was built. Stacks of coal litter one corner. A huge, old furnace CHUGS. The brothers are covered with soot. Ernie shovels some coal into the fire. Lars stacks crates and sweeps. The coal dust makes him COUGH.

INT. ERNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ernie sits at his hobby table and puts the finishing touches on his newest airplane model. He pops in two batteries, presses a button and the propeller spins. He keeps a tight hold on it so it won't fly across the room.

Ernie stands on a chair to hang the plane from the ceiling by a string. He sees the mouse's face poke out of the ceiling heating vent. Reacting knee-jerk, he swats at him with the plane. A wing is demolished, and Ernie falls off the ladder crushing his hobby table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lars hangs one of the framed blueprints of the home above the roaring fireplace.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie watch an old black & white movie on video. They share a big bowl of popcorn. Suddenly, right at the good part the image on the screen goes to fuzz.

Ernie walks over to the VCR. He TAPS it. Nothing. He presses "eject". The tape pops out along with yards of unwound ribbon. Just then, the mouse leaps out of the VCR right at Ernie's face. Ernie reels back SCREAMING.

The mouse zigzags across the floor to escape as a frantic Ernie and Lars try to stomp on it. Ernie throws the bowl of popcorn at the rodent. It miss him, but hits the TV screen. Both shatter. Sparks fly. The mouse is gone.

INT. FOYER - DAY

The front door is kicked open from the outside. Lars and Ernie waddle in struggling with an old-fashioned style porcelain bathtub. They strain to carry it up the curved staircase. Ernie leads the way. Lars holds up the rear.

LARS

Not so fast.

ERNIE

Pull your end up higher.

Ernie bumps the wall with the edge.

LARS
Careful! This is an antique.

Just as Ernie, walking backward, reaches the top step, Lars' eyes bulge. There, sitting on the top of the banister looking down at them, is the mouse.

LARS
(screams)
Ernie!

ERNIE
(jumps)
What?

Ernie looks over his shoulder. He's eye to eye with the mouse. He SCREAMS.

The mischievous mouse slides down the entire length of the banister. As he passes Lars, Lars recoils in horror dropping his end of the tub.

LARS
Get away!

The mouse, holding his little arms up like on a roller coaster, soars off the bottom of the banister and dashes away through the foyer.

Ernie can't hold the heavy bathtub. It flies down the stairs knocking Lars off his feet. He tumbles into the tub. Ernie clutches on the rear rim for dear life as the soaring tub screams down the length of the curved staircase dragging Ernie the entire way.

The tub picks up speed as it zooms across the foyer floor and out the open front door.

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - DAY

Lars rides in the speeding bathtub across the snow covered lawn. Ernie is dragged behind. Both brothers SCREAM as the tub soars down the hill straight for the frozen little pond below.

FROZEN POND

The bathtub busts through the snow covered shrubs and ramps into the air.

LARS/ERNIE
AAAAAHHHHHHH!

The tub and the brothers come straight down onto the center of the ice. THUD!

Calm. Lars sits in the tub and looks around in disbelief. Ernie's face slowly peers over the rim. He rises to his feet. They look at each other dumbfounded. There's a beat, then...

CRRRRAAAACK! The ice beneath them gives way. They are immediately submerged in freezing water. The tub capsizes and sinks to the bottom as they struggle to get out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON mouse hole. A set mousetrap sits inches from the tiny opening in the baseboard once more. CAMERA PULLS BACK through the length of the entire kitchen revealing dozens more mousetraps all over the entire floor.

Lars and Ernie are on their hands and knees setting more traps around them.

ERNIE

Don't you think this is a little overkill?

LARS

Never under estimate your opponent.

ERNIE

A couple of traps would have been enough.

LARS

Not so. Let's say our clever little friend has mastered a way to snap a mousetrap without getting caught so he can eat the food. If he snaps one of these traps, a chain reaction will start snapping them all. He'll panic. He won't know which way to run first. And the law of averages says, one of them will nab him.

Ernie thinks for a moment.

ERNIE

Not bad. I didn't know you held a degree in mouse psychology.

Lars proudly points to his temple. Cocky.

LARS

Now who's thinking? It doesn't take much to figure these things out, little brother. Come on, let's hit the sack.

Suddenly Lars and Ernie realize they have "painted themselves into a corner" so to speak. They have placed mousetraps all

around their bodies, across the whole kitchen floor, and didn't leave an escape route.

LARS

Uh-oh.

ERNIE

Oh yeah, you're thinking all right. Got anymore bright ideas, moron?

Lars carefully extends his foot between several traps. His toe touches one. It almost snaps. He recoils his leg.

LARS

All right, wait a second.

ERNIE

I'm gonna make a jump for it.

LARS

No! The impact will set off all the traps.

ERNIE

Well, I'm not standing here all night.

Ernie leans down and carefully picks up two of the traps. The olive rolls off one and hurls toward the other traps below. Lars quickly catches it in the nick of time. Whew.

LARS

Jesus, Ernie, what are you trying to do snap all the traps? Put those down carefully.

He does.

ERNIE

Lars, I'm gonna get claustrophobic here.

LARS

Just wait a second. Let me think.

ERNIE

No, don't think anymore.

LARS

(sarcastic)

Funny...All right, there's a simple way to extricate ourselves from this situation. I just gotta figure it out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - SUNRISE

The morning sun creeps over the horizon and bathes the snow-covered countryside.

INT. SMUNTZ KITCHEN - SUNRISE

Light streams in from the windows. Lars and Ernie still stand in the middle of the room filled with mousetraps. They're exhausted.

ERNIE

Have you figured it out yet?

LARS

Shut-up! I'm thinking.

Just then, Ernie sees the little mouse peek out the mouse hole. Ernie WHISPERS to Lars.

ERNIE

There he is.

LARS

Keep perfectly still. This is it.

Ernie and Lars watch as the mouse scurries his way across the kitchen between all the traps. Like a maze, the rodent winds around the traps, past Lars and Ernie, never touching one.

The brothers can't figure it out. They watch stonefaced as the mouse scampers up a chair leg, up the wooden arm, and hops onto the formica counter.

LARS

(worried)

Ernie, what's he doing?

ERNIE

Sshh.

The mouse scrambles over to a bowl of fruit, mixed berries, cherries, etc. Sticking out of the bowl is a spoon.

The mouse climbs up to the rim of the bowl and hops onto a large can of baked beans next to it.

LARS

All the cheese and olives in the traps
and he wants fruit.

ERNIE

He's sick of cheese and olives.

Then, to their amazement the mouse leaps off the can of beans onto the handle of the spoon. The spoon catapults a cherry straight up into the air.

The cherry flies through the air in SLOW MOTION.

Lars and Ernie watch in horror as the cherry goes up, up, up, then down, down, down toward the traps.

ERNIE

Run for it!

Just as they are about to dive for cover, the cherry hits a trap. SNAP! The chain reaction begins. SNAP! SNAP! SNAP! SNAP! The traps go off like crazy.

The two brothers panic. Lars and Ernie turn to run, but slam into each other. They hit the ground just as traps SNAP all over them. Their fingers. Their ears. Their noses. Their hair. Their legs.

When the dust settles, Lars and Ernie are covered with painful mousetraps.

LARS/ERNIE

OOOOOWWWWW!

The mouse leaps off the counter onto the floor. Grabs as much cheese and as many olives as he can and darts back toward his hole.

ERNIE

There he goes!

Thinking fast, Lars dashes to the pantry closet. He throws it open and grabs the vacuum cleaner. He tosses Ernie the chord.

LARS

Juice!

Ernie quickly plugs it in as Lars pulls off the floor attachment. The nozzle looks like a big shot-gun barrel. He flips the switch. VOOOSH!

Chasing the mouse with the nozzle, olives and cheese are sucked into the tube. The mouse runs for his life as the force of the vacuum makes it harder and harder for him to run

LARS

It's working!

Struggling and fighting the force, the mouse finally makes it into the hole. Lars jams the end of the nozzle into the mouse hole, splintering the baseboard.

INT. WALL - CONTINUOUS

Nails, dust balls, paint chips all fly into the sucking vortex. The mouse clings desperately to a water pipe, his tail flaps dangerously close to the nozzle. His fur being pulled to its limit.

Right next to where the mouse clutches is an elbow joint in the pipe. The mouse looks from the elbow joint to the nozzle. Back and Forth. Elbow joint, nozzle. Elbow joint, nozzle. An idea brews in his tiny little mind.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lars brandishes the vacuum cleaner like a weapon. The two brothers LAUGH. They hear various objects get sucked into the vacuum cleaner bag.

LARS

I think I got him!

ERNIE

Keep sucking for another minute just to be safe.

INT. WALL - CONTINUOUS

The elbow joint from the pipe has been rotated and affixed to the end of the nozzle. A perfect fit. The mouse is nowhere.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The brothers maniacally wield their vacuum cleaner. They don't see the mouse appear behind them at the kitchen sink. The little rodent struggles to turn on the water faucet rotating the handle with his nose.

INT. WALL - CONTINUOUS

A GUSH OF WATER flies through the pipe and up into the vacuum cleaner nozzle.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

As the brothers' attention is focused on the nozzle in the hole, the vacuum cleaner bag expands as it fills with water. Bigger. Bigger. Bigger. It grows twice the size of the vacuum cleaner itself. Little leaks sprout out of the seams.

ERNIE

We got him!

LARS

Definitely!

At that moment, BOOM! The bag explodes. A massive eruption. A gusher. Water shoots everywhere.

Drenched and covered with traps, Lars and Ernie stare stonefaced at each other. A steady stream of water still shoots up from the nozzle. Water drips from the ceiling and walls. It's raining in their kitchen.

They slowly turn and glare at the mouse on the kitchen sink. The little rodent twitches his nose, blinks his eyes innocently, jumps and does a swan-dive into the drain. Gone. The brothers boil.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - SEVERAL CUTE KITTENS PLAY INNOCENTLY WITH A LITTLE BALL OF STRING.

Lars' and Ernie's big faces COME INTO VIEW as they watch the kitties romp. Band-aids, bruises, and mousetrap burns dot their features. They're looking into a cage. CAMERA FOLLOWS them to the next cage. More kittens roll around. We are...

INT. PET SHOP - MORNING

The brothers move from cage to cage in search of the perfect cat. Ernie is distracted by a CUTE GIRL, who's tapping the cage of a sleeping puppy.

LARS

That one's cute.

ERNIE

(staring at girl)

I'll say.

Lars sees this and tugs Ernie's arm.

LARS

The cat stupid. Come on, I'm already late for work.

(points)

What about that one?

ERNIE

Doesn't look like he's got the killer instinct to me.

MORRY, the shop owner with a double chin, approaches Lars and Ernie.

MORRY

Morning, gentlemen, I'm Morry. Anything I can help you with?

LARS

Hi, Morry. As a matter-of-fact, there is. We need a cat.

ERNIE

Immediately.

MORRY

Well, we have a wonderful selection as you can see. All spayed and neutered. There's a special on Persians.

LARS

These are all kittens. Actually we were hoping for an older cat. One with... experience.

MORRY

That's a switch. Most people want the cute little ones. Experience with what?

ERNIE

Mouse hunting.

MORRY

All cats are good mouse hunters.

LARS

Well, you see, we have huge rats. Lots of them. We need a big, mean kind of cat.

ERNIE

A vicious cat. Do you have any of those?

Morry smiles.

MORRY

Funny you should ask. I had all but given up on anybody wanting him. I was about ready to send him to the pound.

LARS

Who?

MORRY

Follow me.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP ON THE BIGGEST, MEANEST, SCARIEST CAT YOU'VE EVER SEEN.

Black wild fur. Yellow devil eyes. Drooling fangs. He SNARLS from his cage. We are...

INT. PET SHOP BACK ROOM - DAY

On the cage hangs a sign reading: "Catzilla".

MORRY

Nobody ever wanted this one. Spent his whole life in that cage. Boy, is he pissed.

ERNIE

Catzilla?

MORRY

Just a funny name. You know, the kids who clean up named him that. But you can name him anything you want. Fluffy, Boots, whatever.

Lars gets close to the cage and wiggles his finger at the beast.

LARS

Poor little Catzilla. He wants a home. Hi, kitty, kitty.

Suddenly, ROAR! HISS! Razor sharp claws swipe through the bars and rip Lars' sleeve. Lars recoils quickly in horror. His sleeve shredded.

LARS

Little bastard!

ERNIE

We'll take him!

INT. SMUNTZ FOYER - MORNING

We hear HISSING, SCREAMING, SNARLING, BANGING. Lars and Ernie enter the house wrestling with the cardboard cat carrier. It's like there's a Tasmanian devil in there.

They put the box on the floor. It jumps and bounces.

LARS

Stand back! Stand back!

Keeping his distance, Lars reaches forward and opens the flap. VOOM! The little tiger bolts out of the box and tears into the kitchen. The brothers look at each other stunned.

ERNIE

Where'd he go?

They dash after him to see.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

The crazed feline careens around the corner and bee-lines straight for the mouse hole. He HISSES at it and reaches in deep with his paw. Lars and Ernie watch from the other end of the kitchen pleased.

LARS

Look, he's on the scent.

ERNIE

That mouse is toast.

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - MORNING

Lars and Ernie exit the LaRue and hop into Lars' green Bronco.

INT. BRONCO - MORNING

Lars SLAPS a newspaper on Ernie's lap. He pulls a red Sharpee from his jacket and plunks it in his hand.

ERNIE

What's this?

LARS

Want ads. You're finding a job today, remember?

ERNIE

My reputation is not what it used to be, you know. It was hard enough getting that job at Rimpys.

LARS

Just be confident. People have short memories.

Ernie puts the pen in his pocket as Lars throws the car in gear.

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - MORNING

As the Bronco drives away, CAMERA CRANES toward the house and peers into one of the stained glass windows of the kitchen. Catzilla sits waiting outside the mouse hole.

INT. SMUNTZ KITCHEN - MORNING

The committed feline crouches by the hole. Seething. Staring. On the other side of the kitchen behind him, the mouse ambles into the room. He stops dead in his tracks. Uh-oh, a cat!

Not moving a muscle, the cat's acute ears rotate back. He knows something's behind him. The mouse GULPS.

Suddenly, with lightning speed the cat turns around in a blur and is bolting straight for the rodent. The mouse's eyes bug. Quickly turning tail, he runs for his life. The cat tears after him, a speeding monster. They run out of the kitchen.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

They race under the dining room table. Between the legs of the chairs. And into...

INT. FOYER - MORNING

Dashing across the shiny marble, their scrambling legs slip and slide out from under them as they try to take a turn. Catzilla skids into the umbrella stand knocking it over.

They charge out the foyer and into...

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Over the couch. Around the cushy chair. Across the piano keys. PLINK. PLUNK. PLONK. The mouse leaps over a vase filled with flowers. The cat follows suit, but knocks it over. SMASH. Water, glass, and flowers fly.

The mouse scrambles under the oriental rug. So does the cat. The little lump under the carpet is pursued by the bigger lump.

Emerging from the rug, the mouse storms across the hardwood floor for a closed door up ahead, cat breathing down his neck. SWIPE! A cat claw just misses the mouse. Mouse hair flutters as the rodent makes it through the tiny space between the floor and the door by the skin of his teeth.

SLAM! Catzilla hits full-force into the door. Dazed, he shakes his cloudy head clear. He turns to peek under the crack.

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE UP - A CIRCLED WANT AD READING:

THE BEEF BARN
EXPERIENCED COOK WANTED IMMEDIATELY.
FAMILY RESTAURANT.
SEE FARMER LOUIE. 555-BEEF.

The newspaper lowers to reveal we are...

INT. THE BEEF BARN - DAY

A low-rent steak house with sawdust on the floors and saddles hanging from the rafters. A big banner hangs over the salad bar reading: "Sirloin Steak Dinner, \$1.39."

Ernie holds the want ads. He sits at a booth with FARMER LOUIE, a fat slob in overalls and a straw hat. A BUSBOY places rolled up settings at each table. Louie peruses his resume as Ernie explains.

ERNIE
...And after two years at the Cordon
Bleu, I studied personally with the
famous Jean Luc LeBusier at his bistro in
Cambridge.

51.

FARMER LOUIE
(pointing to resume)
With all them fancy cooking schools, how
come you ended up flipping burgers at
Rimpy's?

ERNIE
Well...Farmer Louie...I like to consider
myself a pupil of all forms of culinary
art.

FARMER LOUIE
A Rimpy dog is culinary art? If you say
so...You know, you look awfully familiar.
Have we met before?

ERNIE
Uh, no. I would definitely remember.

FARMER LOUIE
No, I think we have. I think I know you.
I never forget a face.

ERNIE
I highly doubt it...So, when do I start?

Farmer Louie grabs the busboy's arm.

FARMER LOUIE
Hey, Carmine, you know this guy?

The busboy looks up.

BUSBOY
Yeah. He's that guy from the TV that
tried to poison the Mayor at O'Satchmo's.

Farmer Louie's eyes bulge.

FARMER LOUIE
Arnie Smertz! Oh, no. Oh, no, you
don't! The cockroaches in the food.

ERNIE
Actually, it's Ernie Smuntz and it was
just one roach. That whole fiasco was a
big misunderstanding.

FARMER LOUIE
You ain't comin' here to shut me down. I
got a respectable business. Get out!

ERNIE
Please, can't we just...

Farmer Louie stands up. His hulking form dwarfs Ernie.

FARMER LOUIE

Out!

Ernie hurries to the door. He YELLS back.

ERNIE

I'm a millionaire anyhow. I don't need
this dump. Steak for a dollar
thirty-nine? You probably use roadkill.

INT. SMUNTZ KITCHEN - DAY

A white cloud billows through the pantry as a bag of flour is dropped on Catzilla's head. He shakes off the powder and looks up. The mouse stares down at him from the counter. Blinks, then, takes off like a bullet.

Pissed, the now-white cat leaps onto the counter. He chases after the mouse, across the formica knocking everything over in his path. White flour is trekked everywhere.

INT. FOYER - DAY

The mouse dashes up the stairs. The cat tears after him leaving white footprints the whole way.

INT. LARS' BEDROOM - DAY

Chased over the headboard, across the bed, under the covers. A terrible fight is heard under the blankets. HISSING. SCREAMING. YOWLING. Then, zoom, the mouse jumps out from under the covers and out the room. The cat close behind. Lars' sheets left in shreds.

INT. FOYER - DAY

The mouse slides down the banister again. So does the cat. The speed is intense. Our pesky rodent leaps off the bottom and ducks into the living room.

Catzilla can't stop as he nears the end of the banister. Too fast. He SCREAMS and takes off like a missile flying through the air headfirst. SPLAT! He hits the front door and slowly slides down like a raw egg.

Shaking his head clear, Catzilla bolts into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The crazed cat spins around looking for the mouse. Under the couch. Behind the chair. Into the fireplace. He's nowhere.

Suddenly, the mouse leaps off the mantle and lands on the handle of the fireplace bellows. WOOSH! A gust of black soot blows

into the cat's face. COUGH. CHOKES. The mouse bolts for his living room hole in the corner.

Just then, THWACK! Catzilla's paw comes down hard on the mouse's tail. The rodent's little feet scurry, but he's not moving forward. He looks back panicked.

The giant, satanic cat face comes close to his. A gaping, saber-toothed grin chills the mouse. It's finally curtains. The cat gets the mouse in his grasp. He licks his lips. Just as he's about to swallow the little pest in one gulp, the mouse grabs hold of the cat's whiskers and yanks. PLUCK! PLUCK! YEEEEOOOWWW!

Catzilla drops the mouse and clutches his throbbing face. The rodent tears for the hole in the corner. The feline leaps after him. Too late. SLAM! He hits hard into the baseboard.

INT. WALL - MORNING

The big, scary, yellow eye peers into the darkness. Winded, the mouse watches from a safe distance as a razor-sharp claw reaches in and feels around.

INT. STRING FACTORY OFFICE - DAY

Lars sits behind his desk reading over a contract. He SIGHS and shakes his head. Ernie walks in dejected and plops down in the other chair.

LARS

How's the job hunting?

ERNIE

Miserable. Everyone recognizes me. I've been kicked out of five places. One joint even had my picture up behind the cash register with a big sign, "Don't hire him!"...What's the matter with you?

Lars waves some papers in the air.

LARS

Divorce papers.

ERNIE

Boy, she didn't waste any time, did she?

LARS

Ten years of marriage down the toilet. Every fight we ever had was over money. Now we're gonna have money, and she wants freedom.

ERNIE

Good riddance. Now you can be a rich playboy. You can enjoy the perks that money really provides. Girls. When's the last time you kissed a new girl?

LARS

Ten years ago.

ERNIE

You see. You gotta start enjoying life again. Come to think of it, I've gotta start enjoying life again...Look at us. We're about to be multi-millionaires and we're both completely depressed.

LARS

I guess it's true, money can't buy happiness.

ERNIE

Bunk! Money buys everything, especially happiness. We're so close. I can taste it.

INT. SMUNTZ LIVING ROOM - DAY

ON THE MOUSE HOLE

Catzilla strains to reach as deep as he can into the mouse hole. GROWLING. Drooling. Bloodthirsty.

As the cat's attention is focused on the opening, he doesn't notice the sneaky mouse creeping up behind him. The mouse pushes a cocked and loaded mousetrap with his nose toward Catzilla's tail:

The tail swishes and bats dangerously close to the trap. As the mouse slowly backs away, he accidentally bumps into a piece of broken vase. It makes a noise.

The cat looks back quickly. His pupils dilate. His hair stands on end and his tail flutters. It comes straight down on the trap. SNAP!

The cat YOWLS and spins around in pain. The mouse takes off. Trap stuck to his tail, Catzilla bolts after the little pest. The mousetrap BANGING on the floor as he runs.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The mouse tears around a corner and into the kitchen. Catzilla close behind. The mouse leaps for a chair. Catzilla SCREECHES on his breaks. He's heading straight for four cocked mousetraps.

SCREEEECH! Too late. SNAP! SNAP! SNAP! SNAP! All four paws are snagged. YELPING and HISSING. The cat jumps around, a mousetrap stuck to each foot and tail.

The mouse dives from the kitchen table and makes a mad dash for his hole in the baseboard. The cat, mousetraps on every paw, runs and CLOMPS for the hole. The mouse ducks inside in the nick of time. SLAM! The cat smashes full-force into the baseboard again.

Shaking the traps off his paws, Catzilla strains and claws to reach as deeply into the mouse hole as he can.

CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES UP the wall to the ceiling beam directly above the cat. Baskets and pans hang decoratively. Out of a knot in the beam, the mouse sneakily emerges.

MOUSE'S POV - He looks straight down at the rabid cat as he SCRATCHES and bites to get in the wall.

The mouse moves onto one of the hooks that suspends a frying pan. He starts to push the pan free.

ON CATZILLA

In the midst of his frantic SCRATCHING, he stops. Above, he hears a WHISTLE. He looks up.

CATZILLA'S POV - A frying pan hurls DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA until all we see is BLACK. CLANG!

EXT. SMUNTZ HOME - NIGHT

The green Bronco heads up the hill and parks in the driveway.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie enter from the cold. Lars pulls a small fish out of a paper bag as Ernie turns on the lights.

ERNIE

You stunk up the whole car with that thing.

LARS

(wiggling fish)

Here, kitty, kitty. Here Catzilla.

The brothers stop cold. The house is a wreck. Overturned plants. Broken lamps. White flour footprints everywhere. Catzilla is nowhere to be seen.

LARS

What the...?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

It looks like a tornado blew through. Lars and Ernie stand dumbfounded.

ERNIE

Oh, great. Look at this mess. Don't give him that fish.

LARS

Here, Catzilla. Where is he?

ERNIE

He's probably at the race track blowing our money, too.

LARS

Maybe someone broke in.

Ernie points to the trail of cat prints on the counter.

ERNIE

Burglars don't have paws...Man, looks like quite a battle was fought.

LARS

You think he got the mouse?

ERNIE

How could he not?

Just then a faint, pained MEOW is heard from the other room. The brothers look at each other and dash into the...

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

They look everywhere for the cat, but can't find it.

LARS

Here, kitty, kitty. Where the hell is he?

ERNIE

I hear him...Hey, Catzilla, show yourself.

LARS

You think he's stuck somewhere?...I'll go look upstairs.

Before Lars can take a step, he freezes in his tracks. Looking up, his face goes white.

ERNIE

I'll check outside.

Lars stops him. Ernie's alarmed by Lars' expression.

ERNIE
What is it?

Ernie looks up to see what has caught Lars' attention.

ERNIE
Oh my God!

Hanging from the chandelier, hog-tied and humiliated, is Catzilla. He's completely bound with twine, tape covers his mouth.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Lars stands on a ladder and cuts down the pathetic cat. He brings it to the floor where they untie it.

LARS
Somebody definitely broke in. This is just cruel. Who'd do this to a defenseless animal?

ERNIE
Defenseless animal? We're talking about Catzilla here...How could they get in? The doors were locked.

LARS
We're gonna have to get those locks changed. I wonder what they took?

Ernie pulls a little folded note off Catzilla's collar just as Lars unties the last of the twine. The petrified cat YOWLS and bolts out the front door.

LARS
Catzilla!

They rush to the door and watch as the once-brave cat disappears into the night. Ernie looks at the note.

LARS
He'll be back. Cat's always come back. I guess we should call the police now.

ERNIE
(spooked)
Lars, nobody broke in.

LARS
What are you talking about? Look at this place. The cat was strung up like a salami.

Ernie hands Lars the little note. No words on it, just a tiny mouse paw print. Lars GULPS.

CUT TO:

SLAM!

The back door of an extermination truck is closed hard. It reveals CAESAR, exterminator extraordinaire. Very serious, Caesar looks at pest control from a military point-of-view. Decked from head to foot in hi-tech gear, Caesar seems more ready for biological warfare than mouse hunting.

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - MORNING

Caesar marches around the side of his BLUMPS' PEST CONTROL truck. Lars and Ernie try to keep up. On the roof of the truck a giant plastic cockroach lies on its back.

CAESAR

...You shoulda called me first. Rodent control is not for the novice. Bred for survival, they can adapt to almost any condition. Each generation grows smarter. More crafty.

ERNIE

Well, he's crafty, all right.

CAESAR

Not craftier than me.

Caesar opens a side panel of his truck and starts pulling out more gear. He snaps traps to his belt like they're grenades.

CAESAR

I get inside their tiny little brains. I know their wants. Their needs. I start to think like a mouse. And once you can think like a mouse, you can anticipate their next move. And then...BAM!

He punches his fist into his hand. The brothers jump.

Caesar puts a hi-tech looking electronic stethoscope around his neck. An ear piece headset is under his helmet, a coal miner's light affixed to the brim. He straps two canisters onto his back, a hose leading from each to a pump gun holstered to his waist. He fills his breast and thigh pockets with rat poison.

LARS

Gosh, Caesar, you sure gotta lotta gear there.

CAESAR

All state-of-the-art pest control
apparatus. Ultra-sonic sound wave
articulator. Digital scratch detector
with plasma screen radar system.
Infra-red heat sensor with a thousand to
one zoom capacity. High definition
computer chip scent deciphering device.
Rat poison and, uh, sticky paper.

Ernie reaches to touch one of the gadgets.

ERNIE

Wow. Can I...

Caesar SLAPS his hand.

CAESAR

Don't touch...All right, boys, you go to
work and leave everything to me.

LARS

Caesar, we really should warn you. This
mouse is really smart. I mean, really.

CAESAR

There isn't a mouse born that can
outsmart me. One time I was called to
neutralize a nest of subversive rats who
had overtaken a bakery. They found
droppings in the cupcakes.

(disgusted)

Can you imagine, in childrens' cupcakes.
Anyway, I'd been authorized to use
extreme prejudice and had silenced the
entire battalion except the leader. Talk
about a crafty rodent. Well, he met his
match in me, but not before I took some
serious hits. Look.

Caesar untucks his shirt and exposes his left side. It's
covered with Freddy Kruger-style scar tissue.

LARS

Ouch.

CAESAR

Exactly. Now, gentlemen, let me at him.

Caesar marches toward the front door as Lars and Ernie head for
the green Bronco.

CLOSE ON STAINED GLASS WINDOW

From a second story vantage point the little mouse watches
Caesar march toward the front door.

ON LARS AND ERNIE AT THE BRONCO

Before they get in, Lars points to the giant dead roach on the top of Caesar's truck.

LARS

Just think how many lobster loaves you
can make with that cockroach.

ERNIE

(sarcastic)

Oh, you're good.

They get in the Bronco and drive away.

INT. FOYER - MORNING

Caesar STOMPS into the house and SLAMS the door behind him. He stands rigid, hands on his hips like Patton. He surveys.

CAESAR

The hour of judgement is upon you, little
friend!

DISSOLVE TO:

GRAINY, GREEN NIGHTSCOPE POV

The black and green imagery has hi-tech viewfinder maps and blinking lights in the corners. Around furniture close to the floor, WE MOVE through the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Caesar crawls across the floor wearing his heat seeking goggles. He runs the futuristic-looking stethoscope over the floor, along the walls, listening for any rodent activity. At various strategic points he lays sheets of sticky paper.

CAESAR

Where are ya? Where are ya? I know
you're in there. Come out with your paws
up.

Taking himself very seriously, he crawls out the living room toward the foyer. He's completely unaware that the mouse is following him.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Still on his hands and knees, Caesar wriggles across the marble floor. For all his gadgets, he has no idea he's being stalked merely twelve inches behind. The mouse continues to shadow him out the foyer and into...

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Caesar slithers under the dining room table. The rodent quickly scurries up the table leg and onto the table itself.

Caesar spots something on the floor. Bending a magnifying glass to his eye that's affixed to his helmet, he spies mouse pellets.

CEASAR

Droppings.

(disgusted)

Defecating in a dining room. Such unsanitary little beasts.

Caesar pulls a tweezer and a little plastic ziplock bag out of a breast pocket. He carefully collects the evidence.

He sits up next to the dining room table and puts the bag back into a pocket. The militant exterminator is completely oblivious when the mouse walks from the surface of the table onto his helmet.

As Caesar resumes his crawl across the house, the mouse gets a free ride on Caesar's hat.

CEASAR

I know you're close. Make it easy on yourself, little vermin. Filthy, stinkin' vermin.

EXT. MOE'S CAFETERIA - DAY

The Boston city mess hall sits in the middle of the crowded business district. Suddenly TWO LARGE MEN in stained aprons muscle Ernie out of the restaurant and into the street. Ernie picks up his fur hat and puts it back on.

ERNIE

Yeah, well I'd rather eat a cockroach than eat in your greasy dump!...I'm getting tired of this shit!

He throws a snowball at the window. The two large men come out again. He runs away.

EXT. THE BOSTON COMMON - DAY

Even on a cold, windy day PEOPLE stroll through the well-known park. Rest on benches. Play in the snow.

Ernie walks dejected to an empty park bench. Pulling out his want ads, he crosses off Moe's Cafeteria. He peruses his choices. Every circled ad is crossed off.

12.
Angry, he crumples up the paper and tosses it in the trash can next to him. He's bummed. Then, something catches his eye.

Two pretty young women, INGRID and LIBBY, sit on a park bench across from him. His interest is perked. He smiles. They smile back. He waves. They act coy, GIGGLE, then wave back.

Feeling confident, Ernie stands. He walks toward the women ready to strike up a conversation. Ingrid turns to Libby. She speaks with a thick accent.

INGRID

Oo, he's coming this way.

Ernie stops in front of them, extends his hand and clears his throat. But before he can get a word out, a gust of wind lifts his fur hat off his head and across the park. The girls GASP.

ERNIE

Uh-oh!

Ernie chases his rolling hat across the park and into the street. He slips on some ice, then quickly recovers. The girls watch concerned, but amused.

Ernie snatches the hat with his fingertips. Ingrid and Libby APPLAUD. He waves the hat over his head to show the girls he's got it. At that second, SLAM, a city bus hits him. He flies ten feet and lands flat on his back.

The girls are shocked. They run to him.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - A DOOR OPENS REVEALING LARS

A sad smile is plastered across his face. He holds a bunch of roses.

EXT. APRIL'S HOUSE (FORMERLY LARS' AND APRIL'S) - DAY

Lars stands on the front stoop. April is surprised to see him. She's in a bathrobe.

APRIL

Lars, what are you doing here?

LARS

(extends flowers)

I brought these for you.

APRIL

Lars, come on. What's this about?
Didn't you get the divorce papers?

LARS

Yeah, but, I was hoping that today being a special day might shed new light on the so-called divorce papers.

APRIL

They're not so-called divorce papers. They're divorce papers. Legal divorce papers...What special day?

LARS

You don't remember?

APRIL

(impatient)

Lars, I'm busy.

LARS

Our anniversary. Today is our tenth anniversary.

APRIL

Oh, yeah, I must have blocked that out, or something.

Lars is wounded.

APRIL

Lars, that's very sweet...but you're not going to start stalking me or anything, are you?

Just then a deep MALE VOICE comes from the house.

MALE VOICE

Hey, April, tell whoever it is you gave at the office.

Lars looks surprised. April shrugs.

APRIL

Told you I was busy.

TONY, a really buff, ultra-good looking guy with long hair, comes up behind April. He puts his arms around her waist.

TONY

Hey, what's this? Someone sending you flowers?

APRIL

Tony, this is Lars. Lars, Tony.

TONY

The string dude.

LARS

(pained)

How do you do? Nice pecs. Are those implants?

APRIL

All right, that's it. Lars, it's very nice to see you. Happy anniversary. Now please sign the papers and have a good life. Bye.

SLAM. The door closes on the flowers. Lars is left holding a bunch of stems.

CUT TO:

INFRA-RED VIDEO FOOTAGE TRAVELING THROUGH THE INSIDE OF THE WALLS.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Crouched in front of the mouse hole, Caesar watches a small monitor. He operates two joy sticks which steer the remote control camera attached to a bendable snake cable. He maneuvers the tiny camera through the insides of the walls, similar to the way rescue workers find survivors in earthquake rubble.

The mouse still hangs out on the top of Caesar's helmet. He crawls down onto Caesar's backpack and starts chewing on a battery cable.

INT. WALL - DAY

The little remote-control camera rolls through the mouse's domain like a tiny tank. We pass by some hunks of cheese. Olive pits. A Q-Tip. A lipstick container. An upper set of false teeth. Suddenly, the little light goes off and the camera stalls.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The screen goes blank.

CEASAR

What the...?

He taps the monitor. No use. Caesar is unaware of the mouse as the rodent hops off the backpack leaving the frayed cable dangling, then scurries out of the room.

CEASAR

Damn Japanese equipment!

INT. SMUNTZ BASEMENT - DAY

Caesar creeps down the CREAKING staircase into the sooty cellar. The mouse is nowhere to be seen. Using his instruments, gadgets, and devices, he jumps around corners and sneaks along walls like a cop on the trail of a killer.

SCRATCH. SCRATCH. SCRATCH. A sound. His instrument needles go haywire. Caesar's adrenaline surges. He looks across the basement. A worn, old, velvet drape hangs by some wooden crates. The sound again. It comes from behind the curtain.

Caesar cocks an eyebrow and reaches in his belt for his taser gun. He moves toward the curtain. Closer. Closer. The needles are hitting the red zone.

He pauses for a beat. Then, in an instant, yanks the curtain aside. Caesar is face to face with a giant, mutant mouse as big as a Great Dane. He staggers back and SCREAMS.

CEASAR

AAAAHHHH!

He quickly realizes that it's an illusion. A warped mirror magnifies the image of the normal sized mouse. WHEW! Caesar quickly turns. The little mouse is standing behind him. They stare at each other, face to face.

CEASAR

(softly)

There you are. Come here, little fella.
Come here. Caesar's not gonna hurt ya.

The mouse twitches his nose innocently as Caesar readies his taser gun behind his back.

INT. BOSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL/EMERGENCY ROOM CUBICLE - DAY

A DOCTOR examines Ernie's x-rays on the light box.

DOCTOR

No broken bones. No torn cartilage.
You're a lucky man, Mr. Smuntz.

CAMERA PULLS WIDER to reveal Ernie on the little bed in a hospital gown. Ingrid and Libby stand on either side of him.

DOCTOR

You'll probably have one helluva bruise,
but that's about it.

The girls seem even more relieved than Ernie. Ingrid clutches his furry hat.

ERNIE
Well, that's a relief.
(to girls)
See, I told you I was fine. It was just
a tap.

The foreign girls smile.

INGRID
You are so brave, Ernie.

LIBBY
And so strong.

ERNIE
(feigned modesty)
Well, you know...

The doctor winks at Ernie.

DOCTOR
Just sit tight for a few more minutes.
The nurse will bring in the paper work
and you'll be out of here in no time.

The doctor exits.

ERNIE
Thanks, doc.

INGRID
I saved your hat.

She places it on his head.

ERNIE
Thanks. You girls are so nice to come to
the hospital with a total stranger. I
can tell you're not from around here.

The girls GIGGLE.

LIBBY
Oh, no, we are from Belgium. I am Libby
and this is my sister.

INGRID
I am Ingrid.

ERNIE
How do you do? Belgium, how exotic. The
land of waffles.

They look at each other baffled.

ERNIE

What do they speak in Belgium? French?

LIBBY

Flemish.

ERNIE

Flemish...A beautiful language. When I have a head cold I feel flemish.

The girls nod and smile not fully understanding what he means.

ERNIE

So what brings you two all the way to Boston, Mass?

LIBBY

We are here with the Belgium Hair Council for the International Haircare Convention.

INGRID

We are hair models.

ERNIE

Hair models. You don't say? Fantastic. Well, I should have guessed. You both have beautiful hair.

LIBBY/INGRID

Thank you.

He touches Ingrid's long blond mane, then Libby's.

ERNIE

And so soft.

The girls blush.

ERNIE

Hey, I've got a great idea?

LIBBY

What?

ERNIE

Have you girls ever tasted lobster loaf?

EXT. MASSACHUSETTS' COUNTRY ROAD - EARLY EVENING

The green Bronco weaves its way through the winter wonderland. The sun hasn't completely set.

INT. GREEN BRONCO - EARLY EVENING

Lars drives. Ernie sits shotgun.

LARS

(angry)

You walked to the hospital? Don't you know that you're not supposed to move? What if it was a neck injury. You could have been paralyzed...Why didn't you call me immediately?

ERNIE

I'm not paralyzed. You're not listening to me. They're sisters. Beautiful. You should see these faces.

LARS

Did he give you any pain medication?

ERNIE

I'm not in pain. Now will you shut-up and pay attention. They're sisters. Is that perfect, or what?

LARS

I'm not interested.

ERNIE

They're models.

LARS

Super models?

ERNIE

Hair models. Same type of thing. Anyway, they're having dinner at our house, get this, on Valentine's Day. Are we in, or are we in?

LARS

Forget it. Cancel. I'm not ready. April...

ERNIE

April nothing. There's only one way to get over April and that's a leggy, gorgeous hair model whispering Flemish in your ear.

LARS

I don't know.

Out the window a tow truck passes them going the opposite way. It hauls the Blump's Pest Control truck.

LARS

Hey, isn't that Caesar's truck?

ERNIE

(looking back)

Maybe he couldn't get it started in this cold.

They turn a bend and head for their property. Ahead they see swirling red lights. Emergency vehicles are crammed in their driveway and lawn. Police cars. An ambulance. Etc.

LARS

Oh, my God, what happened?

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The brothers dash out of the Bronco and race to the front door. Caesar is carried out on a stretcher by several PARAMEDICS. He's a mess. Bloody nose. Black eyes. Neck brace. And sheets of sticky paper stuck all over him. He MUMBLES nonsense.

Lars and Ernie run along side the stretcher.

LARS

Caesar! What happened?

The paramedics stop just before putting him in the ambulance. Caesar grabs Lars's lapels and pulls him close.

CEASAR

The hill. The whole damn hill. Not one body. Not one stinkin' body. I can't hold out. Need reinforcements.

Lars and Ernie look at each other totally baffled. One of the paramedics turns to Lars.

LARS

We left him here this morning to exterminate the house.

PARAMEDIC

Sometimes the rat poison that they use does funny things to their brains.

ERNIE

How'd you find him? Where was he found?

A COP pipes in.

COP

We got an anonymous 911 call. No voice, but we could hear the screaming in the background. The address comes up automatically on the screen...We found

COP (cont'd)
 him in a ball locked in a trunk in the
 attic covered with that sticky tape.
 It's terrible.

Suddenly Caesar SCREAMS at the top of his lungs.

CEASAR
 MOUSE! MOUSE! HELP! MOUSE!

PARAMEDIC
 We gotta get him outta here.

They hoist the SCREAMING wreck into the ambulance.

COP
 (yells)
 All right, let's move people!

The cop hands the brothers each a card.

COP
 We surveyed the property. Whoever did it
 is long gone. If you have anymore
 trouble, just call the station.

In a blur of SIRENS, swirling lights, and HORNS all of the
 emergency vehicles disappear down the hill and around the
 corner.

Lars and Ernie stand quiet in front of the empty house. They
 turn and look up at the looming structure.

LARS
 Ernie.

ERNIE
 Yeah.

LARS
 I don't think we're dealing with an
 ordinary mouse.

CUT TO:

ITEMS QUICKLY FILLING AN OVERSIZED SHOPPING CART

Tools. A saw. A hatchet. A chain saw. A Hose. A shovel.
 Blocks of wood. Etc. We are...

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Lars and Ernie stock up for battle. They fill the cart with
 anything that might be useful from the long shelves. Ernie
 throws several bundles of rope and twine onto the pile. Lars
 sees they are Zepco brand. He sneers at Ernie.

ERNIE
 (shrugs)
 It's all they have.

CHECK-OUT COUNTER

Items are bagged. The register BEEPS. A Credit card is swiped through the machine.

CUT TO:

TIGHT SHOTS

An elaborate apparatus is taking shape in QUICK CUTS. Beams are nailed to the floor. A shovel handle is screwed to a hinge. Ropes are pulled. Screws are tightened. Voila!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sitting in the middle of the floor is a ridiculous eyesore. A make-shift catapult has been built. Fashioned out of a snow shovel, beams, blocks, fishing gear, and rope.

The edge of the snow shovel blade is butted right up against the mouse hole. A baseball sits in it. The shovel is pulled tight to the floor by the rope, which leads to another corner of the kitchen where Lars stands with a hatchet. The rope is tied to a stake by his foot.

Way at the back of the kitchen waits Ernie, poised with a catcher's mitt. A bucket filled with water sits next to him.

Lars chops the rope. The rope snaps loose. The shovel springs straight up. The baseball catapults across the entire length of the kitchen. THWACK! It hits smack-dab in the middle of Ernie's mitt. Ernie quickly dunks the baseball into the bucket of water. Success.

LARS
 Perfect. That'll work perfect. Want something done right, you gotta do it yourself.

ERNIE
 Hook it back up. Let's drown that little bastard!

Lars runs to refix the contraption back to working order. He stretches the shovel back into place and reties the rope to the stake.

ERNIE
 But what if he doesn't walk onto the shovel?

LARS

Oh, he'll walk onto the shovel all right.
What mouse can resist an exotic cheese
bonanza?

Lars bends in front of the shovel and places a variety of
cheeses onto the blade.

LARS

Cheddar. Muenster. Ghouda. Brie. And
of course, Brazilian Monkey Cheese.

As Lars arranges the smorgasbord, both brothers are unaware of
the mouse chewing on the rope where it's tied to the stake.

LARS

There.

Lars stands.

LARS

Now all we have to do is wait.

Suddenly, THWAM! The shovel springs up and smacks Lars right in
the face. He flies backward flailing his arms.

Ernie is hit with all the cheese as Lars tumbles backward.
SPLASH! His head gets stuck in the water-filled bucket.

LARS

(voice echoes inside bucket)

Help! Help! I can't breathe!

Ernie struggles to pull the bucket off Lars' head. He pulls.
He strains. Finally, POP! Ernie flies backward smashing into a
wall. A shelf above breaks loose. Dishes and glasses rain down
on him with a CACOPHONOUS CLATTER.

Both brothers look up from their disaster. They see the mouse
by his hole innocently eating a piece of the cheese. He
twitches his nose and ducks into the wall.

LARS

(pissed)

That's it!

ERNIE

What?

Lars bolts up. He marches to a storage closet near the back
door. Throws it open. He frantically roots through the
hardware store bags.

ERNIE

What's it? What are you gonna do?

Lars pulls a stick of dynamite out of a bag.

LARS

I'm gonna kill that damn mouse once and
for all.

INT. WALL - NIGHT

The stick of dynamite is pushed through the hole. The mouse watches curiously as the red cylinder rolls up next to him.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lars unrolls a spool of copper wire that leads from the hole across the entire kitchen floor. He backs out of the kitchen followed by Ernie.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie uncoil the wire all the way into the center of the living room. They're committed. Ernie hands Lars the detonator plunger.

LARS

How do I attach this thing?

ERNIE

Wrap each wire around each screw.

LARS

Like this?

ERNIE

No, that's the plunger, stupid...Here.

INT. WALL - NIGHT

The mouse grabs hold of the dynamite stick in his strong jaws and scurries through the hollow walls.

INT. FLOOR - NIGHT

Carrying the explosive, the mouse races through the space between the first floor and basement ceiling. He comes to a spot busy with phone wires, electrical cables, and pipes. He drops the dynamite and dashes away.

CAMERA MOVES UP from the dynamite, through the floor and into...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CAMERA MOVES UP to Lars and Ernie directly over the stick of dynamite. The plunger is rigged.

ERNIE

There.

LARS/ERNIE

One-two-three!

Lars plunges the little handle. BOOM! An eruption of fire blows up through the floor engulfing them. They fly straight up, then come straight down. They fall through the hole in the floor in a shower of splinters and dust.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie crash through the ceiling, tumble through the air, and SLAM, hit the basement floor hard. Flat on their backs. They GROAN in pain.

Through the hole in the ceiling they can see up into the living room. The little twitching nose and big black eyes of the mouse peer down at them from the opening.

LARS

I hate that damn mouse!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie MOAN and GROAN into the kitchen. Everything hurts. Their hair stands straight up. Eyelashes singed off. Clothes in tatters. They plop down at the kitchen table exhausted.

Lars shakes his head and grimaces at Ernie with disdain.

LARS

(sarcastic)

Thanks.

ERNIE

What did I do?

LARS

(mimicky whine)

Oh, it's just a little mouse.

(yells)

Yeah, just a little mouse. That's why we have a gaping hole in our living room floor!

ERNIE

Excuse me, but I wasn't the one who threw a stick of dynamite into the wall! That was totally irrational!

LARS

Well, if you're so rational, why didn't you stop me?

The brothers jump to their feet hoping mad. They're SCREAMING at each other.

ERNIE

Because I assumed you knew what you were doing! Obviously I was wrong! Clearly, you haven't a clue! I don't know why I ever listen to you!

LARS

You never do listen to me! You never have! I'm supposed to be your big brother, Ernie!

ERNIE

Then act like one! Set a good example! Be someone I want to emulate instead of a chump who lets other people walk all over him!

LARS

I'm a chump? Who do I let walk all over me?

ERNIE

April! Pop! You name it!

LARS

Well, at least I don't try to poison people with toxic insects and dirty toilet paper!

Ernie turns bright red. He's livid.

ERNIE

It wasn't dirty!

Ernie grabs an orange out of the fruit bowl and whips it at Lars. Lars ducks. The orange SCREAMS over his head and unexpectedly...BAP...it beans the mouse, who was sitting on the counter. The mouse falls onto the floor unconscious.

Ernie and Lars freeze. In a flash they run to the other side of the counter to see. Dropping to their hands and knees, they stare at the tiny, furry body lying on the floor, still.

LARS

Oh my god. You killed it.

ERNIE

I didn't even know he was there.

LARS

Just think of all the trouble we coulda saved if we just woulda thrown fruit at him in the first place.

Ernie squints closer.

ERNIE

Lars, look, I think he's still breathing.

LARS

Well, kill him.

Ernie scrambles to get the hatchet near the stake. He raises it in the air. Freezes.

LARS

What are you waiting for?

ERNIE

I can't.

LARS

Do it!

ERNIE

I can't just kill him with an axe.

LARS

Why not?

ERNIE

Look at him. He's pathetic.

LARS

Pathetic? He tried to kill us! He's some mutant genius mouse who's out to destroy our lives.

ERNIE

Lars, he's just a little furry rodent. Look at him lying there. Helpless. I...I...I can't do it.

Lars grabs the hatchet.

LARS

Give me that thing!

Lars raises the axe above his head. He's about to chop the mouse in half, but then...he doesn't.

LARS

Aw, hell! He's just lying there. It doesn't feel very sportsman-like.

ERNIE

What should we do?

LARS

We could bury him.

ERNIE

Alive? That's torture.

LARS

Let's flush him.

ERNIE

What if he mutates in the sewer with all that waste and those chemicals? He could grow into some giant toxic beast and come back to seek revenge.

LARS

Please. I suppose he could stuff the toilet though.

The mouse's tail twitches. They jump.

ERNIE

We gotta do something quick. I think he's coming to.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - A TAPED, BOUND, WRAPPED, AND SEALED SHOE BOX.

Lots of stamps decorate the corner. The address in bold, black letters reads:

TO: MR. FIDEL CASTRO
HAVANA, CUBA

QUICK PULL OUT to reveal we are...

EXT. POST OFFICE - NIGHT

The building is closed for the evening. Lars and Ernie stick the shoebox in a mail door. The sign reads: "For International Packages only."

They peek through the little door and watch the package slide down the chute and into the post office.

ERNIE

Have a nice trip, you little rat.

They shake each others' hand. A job well-done.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie enter their now-peaceful home. There's a beat. Then, uncontrollably they begin square dancing in the front hall. They're elated.

ERNIE

Wait, wait, wait! What's the date today?

LARS

(thinks)

Uh, February 12th.

ERNIE

Two days till Valentine's Day. You know what that means?

LARS

Candy?

ERNIE

Chicks. Two beautiful chicks. Are you ready to have a good time for once in your life?

Lars thinks for a minute, then smiles.

LARS

Yeah!

They resume square dancing as a MONTAGE complete with HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC kicks in.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lars and Ernie carry in a large, flat piece of plywood and put it over the dynamite hole. They cover the plank with the oriental rug.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCAL POST OFFICE - DAY

Hundreds of letters and packages are separated by hand. WE FOLLOW the box containing the mouse as it's thrown into a bin. The bin is rolled through the little building and loaded onto a truck.

EXT. BOSTON STREET - DAY

The U.S. Mail truck comes around a corner and heads for the Main Branch of the Boston Post Office. A huge institutional looking building.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ernie fixes the broken shelf. He restacks new dishes. Lars disassembles the catapult. They both seem happy for the first time in awhile.

CUT TO:

INT. BOSTON MAIN POST OFFICE - DAY

Cavernous. Millions of letters and packages are sorted automatically by elaborate machines. Parcels travel along conveyor belts. We spot the shoebox as it moves fast. Across rollers. Down a chute. Into another bin. WE FOLLOW the bin to the loading dock, where it's forklifted into one of a dozen huge U.S. Mail Trucks.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

A mail truck pulls up to a 747. The crates and bins of mail travel up a conveyor belt into the cargo hold of the enormous jetliner. We see the shoebox in the mix.

CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Ernie shops. His cart overflowing with food. Squinting into the lobster tank, he haggles with the GUY behind the fish counter as to which are the biggest lobsters. The guy holds one up for Ernie's approval.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAVANA AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

Palm trees. Castro billboards and cigar advertisements decorate the airfield. The 747 touches down.

INT. CUBAN POST OFFICE - DAY

An open air building with ceiling fans and wicker. WE FOLLOW the shoebox along another conveyor belt. A CUBAN POSTAL WORKER plucks the box off the belt and weighs it. He takes a rubber stamp and THUMP. He stamps the package. It reads: "INSUFFICIENT POSTAGE. RETURN TO SENDER."

CUT TO BLACK:

MONTAGE ENDS

DING! DONG!

The door opens revealing Ingrid and Libby.

INGRID/LIBBY

Ha-llo!

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie eagerly greet the two women.

ERNIE

Well, look who it is. Right on time,
girls.

Ingrid and Libby enter the front hall with friendly greetings. They GIGGLE at everything. Their hair is piled up on their heads in bizarre sculptures. High and stiff.

The brothers are in their dinner jackets trying their best to look suave. Lars' hair is parted and combed perfectly to the side. He's a little shy. First date in over ten years.

ERNIE

Come in. Come in.
(looking at their strange
do's)
Your hair looks beautiful.

INGRID

Thank you. We just came from rehearsal.
Tomorrow night is the big hair show.

ERNIE

And you certainly have big hair to show,
right Lars?

LARS

Huge.

ERNIE

Ingrid, Libby, this is my brother, Lars.
Lars, Libby and Ingrid.

They all shake hello.

LARS

Ernie said you were pretty, but boy was
he wrong.

Ernie and the two girls look at Lars stunned.

LARS

(stammers)

No, I mean, you're so much prettier than
I imagined, is what I'm trying to say...
If I could talk maybe...What I meant
was...An understatement.

Ernie pats Lars on the shoulder.

ERNIE

Lars is a little nervous. Please forgive him. He's going through a divorce right now.

Ingrid and Libby immediately reach out to Lars.

LIBBY/INGRID

Oohh...

LIBBY

That is so sad. We're sorry.

INGRID

How hard it must be for you.

LARS

Yeah, well...onward and upward.

ERNIE

Great attitude. No looking back. That's my big brother...Okay, why don't you three get acquainted while I check on dinner.

LIBBY

It smells delicious.

ERNIE

Lars, give the girls the grand tour.

LARS

Okay, ladies, after you.

He motions toward the living room. They walk out. Lars grabs Ernie peeved.

LARS

What'd you mention the divorce for?

ERNIE

Are you kidding? Women love that stuff. The second I mentioned it, they touched you. Did you notice? Now you're the sensitive guy.

LARS

Well, just don't talk about it any more.

ERNIE

Fine. Hurry up. Keep them company.

Ernie heads to the kitchen, Lars to the living room.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ernie dashes in. Pots simmer on the stove. Bread bakes in the cooker. He opens the oven and checks the lobster loaf. Perfect. Stirs the sauce.

Then, he places a marachino cherry on the chopping block. He turns to grab the tooth picks. When he turns back, the cherry is gone. Ernie looks everywhere for it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lars finishes pouring some wine and hands it to the girls.

LARS

You ladies are saints for accompanying my brother to the hospital like that. A total stranger and all.

INGRID

We are so glad he's all right.

LIBBY

We felt so bad when it happened. To think he almost died for his hat.

LARS

Well, he loves hats.

INGRID

We never wear hats.

LARS

Really.

INGRID

They constrict the follicles in the scalp. Hair is healthier when it is free.

LARS

I understand. Nothing like free hair.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The candles are lit. The places are set. Everyone is having fun. Ernie arranges the seating.

ERNIE

Okay, boy, girl, boy, girl. Lars, you sit over there.

Lars and Ernie each pull a chair out for the girls. Ernie scoots Libby's chair in. As Ingrid sits, CRASH! Her chair

collapses. She hits the ground hard. The chair legs stick out in four different directions.

LARS
Oh, my God!

They all rush to her.

LIBBY
Ingrid!

ERNIE
Are you okay?

INGRID
I'm fine. I'm fine.

They help her to her feet. She blushes with embarrassment. Her hair has shifted. It's now a little like the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

LARS
I'm so sorry. This furniture is very old.

ERNIE
You're our first guests. We should have tested the chairs before hand.

Ingrid stands to the side as Lars gives her his chair. Lars and Ernie pick up the pieces. Upon examining them, Lars taps Ernie.

LARS
Ernie, let's get rid of these in the kitchen and grab another chair.

He motions with his head for Ernie to follow.

ERNIE
Oh, okay. Girls, we'll be right back.

The girls GIGGLE.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The brothers rush in with the broken chair pieces.

LARS
Great way to make a first impression,
Lars. I think she really likes you now.

Lars shows Ernie the legs.

LARS
Ernie, look!

Ernie takes the legs. It is obvious they have been chewed through beaver-style.

LARS
That mouse musta chewed through the legs before we got him.

ERNIE
Don't mention the mouse to the girls.

LARS
Well, duh!

Lars grabs a kitchen chair and dashes out. Ernie runs to the food.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lars, all smiles, pulls the kitchen chair up to the table and sits. It's markedly shorter than the dining room chairs. He looks like a little kid.

LARS
There we go. Sorry about that. You sure you're okay?

INGRID
Very sure. I have lots of padding down there.

The girls GIGGLE as Ernie comes out with the soup tureen and ladle.

ERNIE
Soup's on.

Ernie CHUCKLES in that dad-sort-of-way. He ladles soup into each bowl.

LIBBY
Oh, yummy. We eat lots of soup in Belgium.

ERNIE
Hear that, Lars? We should go to Belgium and have soup.

Ernie sits down. The girls daintily begin to eat.

INGRID
So, Lars, how long were you married?

LARS

Ten years.

LIBBY

Oh, my, that's a long time. Are you sad?

LARS

Well, sometimes.

ERNIE

(jumps in)

But not tonight. Tonight he's happy.
Right, Lars?

LARS

(forcing it)

That's right, Ern. Tonight it's all
about fun.

INGRID

Mmm, this soup is delicious.

ERNIE

(taking a big spoonful)

Thank you.

LIBBY

I especially like the raisins.

Ernie stops in his tracks confused.

ERNIE

Raisins?

LIBBY

Very original.

Ernie quickly gets up and looks into Libby's bowl. Three little black things float on top. Lars cranes his neck to see. Uncontrollably he SPIT TAKES the soup in his mouth. Ernie instantly starts picking up the soup bowls.

ERNIE

Welp, let's not fill up on soup. Lars,
help me get this stuff in the kitchen.

LARS

Right O, Ernie!

INGRID

But I'm not done.

ERNIE

Yes, you are. It's tradition in America.
You only eat half the soup.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie argue over the soup tureen. Ernie holds a little black "raisin" in a spoon.

LARS

Didn't you wash that damn thing out
before you put the soup in?

ERNIE

I thought I did.

LARS

Well, you couldn't have because there's
mouse poo in it. Haven't you ever heard
of E-Coli bacteria poisoning?

ERNIE

It was cooked through.

LARS

Regardless...How nice of the little
bastard to leave us a gift before his
trip.

ERNIE

(hushed)

Libby ate some.

LARS

(green)

What she doesn't know won't hurt
her...Oh, God, I lost my appetite.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The two girls talk and GIGGLE to each other in Flemish. Lars and Ernie enter all smiles. Ernie carries a covered platter. Lars, a bowl filled with sauce.

ERNIE

Who's hungry?

INGRID/LIBBY

Me.

Ernie places the platter down in the center of the table.

ERNIE

(clears his throat)

Now, if I may be so bold. This is an
original dish that actually made me
somewhat of a celebrity in the Boston
area.

LARS

(jabs)

Just ask the Mayor.

Ernie shoots him a look, then continues.

ERNIE

Ladies, may I present to you Ernie
Smuntz's famous lobster loaf.

With fanfare, Ernie lifts the silver cover. Lying on top of the lobster loaf like a luau pig with a marachino cherry in his mouth is the mouse.

Ingrid and Libby SCREAM at the top of their lungs. Lars and Ernie's eyes bug. Their jaws drop.

LARS

It's him!

ERNIE

It can't be! He's in Cuba!

Suddenly, the mouse turns his head and spits the cherry directly at Libby as she SCREAMS. It flies right in her mouth. She CHOKES and GAGS on it.

Then the beast leaps at Ingrid and lands smack-dab in her sculptured hair-do. She panics and starts clawing at her huge hair.

INGRID

Get it out! Get it out!

Ernie performs the Heimlich maneuver on Libby as Lars tries to help Ingrid. She bends over the table scratching and tugging at her scalp.

LARS

Hold still! Hold still!

Ingrid's hair bumps a candle and catches on fire. Smoke starts to billow out from her head. The mouse scampers down her neck, between her cleavage, and into her dress.

Her hair is starting to flame. She wriggles and jiggles at the mouse in her clothes. Lars grabs the bowl of sauce and heaves it at the SHRILLING Ingrid's flaming head to douse the fire. SPLAT! The gooey gravy covers her.

Ernie compresses Libby's chest over and over. POP, the cherry shoots out of her mouth and BOINKS Lars in the eye.

LARS

Ow!

Ingrid flails and jumps like a complete loon. The mouse running rampant through her dress.

LARS
I'll get it!

Not thinking, Lars shoves his hand down her cleavage. Libby immediately starts beating Lars on his head with the silver lid.

LIBBY
Get your hands out of there, you degenerate!

Just then, the mouse drops out of the bottom of Ingrid's dress and zigzags around the floor. Everybody jumps out of its way like a bunch of panicked elephants.

The rodent dashes between Libby's feet. She freaks and leaps onto the table. Ernie grabs a chair and hoists it over his head.

ERNIE
Stand back!

The mouse darts under the dining room table. Ernie brings the chair down hard. CRASH! He misses the mouse, but whacks off one of the table legs. The front half of the table collapses.

All the food, dishes, and Libby slide down the long oak table and across the floor. Libby shoots out of the dining room and across the foyer marble, gaining momentum on the greasy sauce. Ernie chases after her. She heads straight for the...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Libby skids to a stop on the oriental rug right on top of the plywood. CRACK! The plank gives, splitting in half. Libby, the oriental carpet, and splintered plywood fall through the hole in the living room floor.

Ernie dives to grab her. He snatches hold of the only thing he can snag...her hair.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Hanging by her hair, Libby flails, kicks, and SCREAMS high above the basement floor.

LIBBY
OOWW! OOWW!

ERNIE
I gotcha! I gotcha!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ernie strains with all his might to hoist her back up through the hole. Suddenly, RIIIIIP! He tumbles backward. In his hands he clutches most of Libby's hair.

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

The two beaten, humiliated, and now mostly bald models race from the front door. Still shocked and furious, they SCREAM obscenities in Flemish. They jump in their rental car and peel away.

Lars and Ernie run onto the porch.

ERNIE

Wait! Come back!

The taillights disappear around the corner. The brothers boil.

LARS

(stunned)

How can it be? How can it be? You must not have put him in the box properly!

ERNIE

You were there! You saw him in the box! Maybe he has a demonic twin brother?

They turn slowly and re-enter the house.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Leaving the door open, Lars and Ernie walk into the front hall, both red-faced and shaking. Lars takes deep breaths desperately trying to calm himself.

LARS

(to himself)

Relax. Relax.

Ernie surveys the mess. Lars reaches into his pocket and pulls out the little, frayed, filthy piece of string that his father gave to him on his death bed. He holds it up.

ERNIE

What the hell is that?

LARS

Pop's lucky string.

(looks upward)

Pop, if you're listening, give us strength. We need you, pop.

Just then, from seemingly out of nowhere, the mouse swings from a twine hanging from the chandelier. He swoops across the front hall in true swashbuckling fashion.

Hanging on with one claw, soaring like Quasimodo, he grabs the lucky string out of Lars' fingers with the other claw and sails toward the front stairs.

The mouse dives off the twine and bounds up the stairs as fast as his little legs can carry him. The brothers watch catatonic as the rodent reaches the landing, scrambles up to the top of the grandfather clock overlooking the staircase, and strikes a pose just as it CHIMES the hour. BONG! BONG! BONG! Etc.

ERNIE

(livid)

He's mocking us! That little shit is
mocking us!

Lars loses all control. He explodes with rage.

LARS

THIS MEANS WAR!

The brothers bolt up the stairs leaping two at a time. Veins bursting.

The mouse, thinking fast, jumps behind the clock. Dashes underneath the massive time piece. In a blink we see rabid mouse teeth gnawing through the two front legs of the grandfather clock like a tiny buzz saw. Sawdust shoots.

Just as the brothers reach the top landing, the front legs of the clock collapse. The heavy antique pitches forward. They stop in panic. Turn on a dime and run like mad back down the stairs.

The mighty oak clock falls forward and flies down the stairs like a toboggan. They try to outrun it. No chance. The soaring clock knocks into the backs of their knees. Ernie and Lars tumble backwards onto the speeding clock.

Riding it like a luge sled, the brothers SCREAM as the zooming clock hurricanes down the stairs, across the marble foyer and out the open front door.

INT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

The runaway grandfather clock carrying Lars and Ernie flies across the porch, through the snow and down the hill. It's heading straight for the frozen little pond.

LARS/ERNIE

AAAAAHHHHH!

AT THE POND

The clock hits the powder-covered bushes and ramps into the air. Lars, Ernie, and the clock sail through the sky and come down right in the bathtub-shaped hole in the ice. SPLASH!

UNDER THE WATER

The heavy clock sinks quickly to the bottom of the murky, freezing pond. It lands in the bathtub.

AT THE POND

Ernie and Lars flap and flail in the frigid water. They claw their way out and collapse in the snow. Lars spots something at the foot of the driveway next to the mailbox.

LARS

Ernie, over there.

They scramble on their hands and knees to the wood post mailbox. In the snow Lars picks up the shoebox addressed to Cuba, a huge, gnawed, shredded hole gaping in its side. A tiny trail of mouse footprints in the snow lead from the box toward the house.

LARS

(furious)

Insufficient postage?! Return to sender?!

Lars throws the box in Ernie's face.

LARS

You idiot! You didn't put on enough stamps!

Lars shoves Ernie in the chest. He staggers backward. Ernie fumes.

ERNIE

Me? They were your stamps, moron!

Ernie takes a swing at Lars. POW, a right to the jaw. Lars lunges at Ernie and tackles him to the ground. The two brothers roll and punch and struggle in the snow.

Suddenly, SLAM! The front door of the house bangs shut. Ernie and Lars freeze. They run up the hill as fast as they can. Just as they reach the porch, they hear the BOLT LOCK.

Lars struggles to open the door. Can't.

LARS

He locked us out!

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

The mouse hops off the bolt latch and scurries toward the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A meal fit for a king is all over the floor. The mouse dives headfirst for the lobster loaf. He gorges himself. His little cheeks filled to the brim.

Just then, CRASH! A metal garbage can smashes through the stained glass window. Garbage and multi-colored glass shower into the room.

The mouse stops in his tracks as Ernie and Lars barrel in through the jagged opening. Their wet clothes and hair half frozen. Their expressions are crazed like wild animals.

Lars spots the mouse. He heaves the garbage can at him. The little pest dives away just as the can bashes into the hutch filled with china and glassware. It's totally destroyed.

The mouse dashes for the kitchen with a scalloped potato in his mouth. The brothers charge after him. Ernie slips on the lobster loaf and falls into Lars. Lars is knocked off his feet and lands face-first into the side of the garbage can, denting it dramatically. When he pulls his head out, his face is molded into the tin.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The mouse tears across the floor and ducks into his favorite hole. The brothers barrel after him. SLAM! They both hit the wall hard dislodging big pans, baskets, and flower pots.

ERNIE

OW! SHIT!

Lars grabs a hammer out of a drawer. With demented abandon, he yanks chunks away from the baseboard with the back end of the hammer, widening the hole.

LARS

I'm gonna tear him apart with my bare hands! I'm gonna eat him raw!

INT. WALL - NIGHT

As the hammer RIPS the hole wider and wider, the mouse nonchalantly sits on the pipe eating his potato and watching.

Suddenly a sound echoes...BUUUZZZZZZZZZZ!

Then, the whirling blade of a chainsaw tears into the wall missing the mouse by an inch. He scrambles up the wall toward

the ceiling as the huge saw shreds through the guts of the wall cutting the pipe in half. Water shoots everywhere.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lars stands back as Ernie wields the chainsaw. Like a madman, he carves a zigzagged hole the size of a Buick. Water spews into the room. Dust flies all over.

Lars pulls the remaining drywall down exposing the wall's innards. They SCREAM over the sound.

ERNIE

You see him?

LARS

No!

Lars sticks his head into the wall as he tries to spot the rodent. Just then, Ernie catches sight of the little beast coming out of a knot in the ceiling beam directly overhead.

ERNIE

(crazed)

AH-HA!

Ernie swings the chainsaw high above his head and cuts the beam in half like butter. The mouse dives for cover as the severed beam breaks loose from the ceiling. Lars looks up just as the swinging oak beam slices across the kitchen taking everything out in its path...and WHACK...Smacks Lars right in the face.

The force sends Lars flying backward. He flails across the kitchen and CRASH, flies out a stained glass window.

EXT. SMUNTZ BACKYARD - NIGHT

Lars busts out the window and plops into a six-foot snowdrift headfirst, disappearing into the white.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The mouse dashes between Ernie's legs and out the kitchen. Ernie chases after him SCREAMING, swinging the chainsaw wildly.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Jumping on the banister, the rodent scrambles up, up, up. The chainsaw comes down right behind his tail. It cuts through the railing.

Ernie storms up the stairs after him, taking out pieces of banister all the way up. The blade just missing his tail each time.

The mouse reaches the top first. Just as Ernie nears the upper landing, a hail of moth balls roll down the wooden stairs. Getting under his feet, Ernie loses his footing.

The mouse stands behind an overturned box of moth balls. He nudges it further with his little nose.

Ernie's feet fly out from under him. He sails backward down the stairs. The ROARING chainsaw flies out of his hands.

THUD! Ernie hits the foyer floor hard. Looking up, he sees the chainsaw hurling straight down toward his face, blade first. His eyes bulge.

ERNIE

AAAAHHHH!

The chainsaw blade stabs into the floor one millimeter from Ernie's ear. The force of the spinning blade causes the big saw to take off. It tears across the tile under its own power, sawing a huge gash along the floor and everything else in its path. It zigzags out of the foyer and around the corner.

Ernie jumps to his feet. His instinct is to chase the wayward saw...but he spots the mouse on the top step staring down at him. Twitching that nose. Blinking those eyes. Ernie's rage boils. He tears up the stairs after the little demon.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

CRASH! Lars kicks the back door off its hinges and into the war zone of a kitchen. He storms in covered with snow, a demented grimace stretches across his face. In one hand he holds a sledge hammer. In the other a red and yellow gallon can of gasoline.

QUICK CUTS OF LARS GEARING UP FOR BATTLE

Lars throws open the kitchen closet. Yanks out the vacuum cleaner.

He fills the vacuum cleaner bag with gasoline.

The hatchet is holstered in his belt.

Also a carving knife and a long-neck, barbeque grill spark lighter.

Lars turns and FACES CAMERA. Snorting fire, loaded and ready for battle, the vacuum cleaner nozzle hangs around his shoulder. Sledge hammer in hand.

LARS

Mouse hunting season is officially open!

With a BELLOWING WAR-CRY, Lars runs out of the kitchen and around the corner.

Beat.

Lars comes running back into the kitchen followed by the runaway chainsaw. He races for his life, the whirling blade searing through the floor right on his heels.

The out-of-control saw chases Lars through the kitchen, around the table, and into the...

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lars runs as fast as he can from the angry power tool. The speeding saw slices the collapsed dining room table in half. Lars jumps for cover, swinging the sledge hammer wildly with one hand. He clutches the vacuum with the other.

Lars leaps onto the overturned garbage can. Struggling to keep his balance, he rolls across the floor like that log balancing contest. He loses his footing. The garbage can shoots across the room.

Lars flies straight up and comes straight down. THUD! Flat on his back. He lands with his legs and arms extended like a big X. He looks up.

LARS' POV - The zooming chainsaw chews up floor and heads straight for Lars' crotch.

Lars dive rolls to the side without a second to spare. The relentless blade skims across his entire back, taking out the seat of his pants, the back of his shirt, and shaving the back of his head bald.

The chainsaw doubles back and starts heading for Lars again. He jumps up. Just as the blade is about to sever his heels from his feet, he leaps for the chandelier. Grabbing hold of the mighty crystal fixture, he swings back and forth as the saw passes right under him and out the dining room.

LARS

Whew!

Suddenly, CRASH! The chandelier rips out of the ceiling and shatters onto the floor on top of Lars. He struggles underneath the massive ornament. He's totally encased in crystal and wire.

INT. LARS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

SMASH! Lars' 4-poster bed is overturned breaking to pieces against the wall. Ernie struggles across the mattress after the little beast. He grabs hold of one of the broken posts and swings insanely, pulverizing everything in his path.

The mouse runs across Lars' bureau between cologne bottles and photographs. CRASH! Ernie misses him, but demolishes everything else.

The rodent darts toward a vent in the baseboard. Thinking quickly, Ernie grabs a pillow off the floor and whirls it at the grating. Good aim. He blocks it. The mouse SCREECHES on his little brakes.

Ernie lumbers toward the rodent like a psycho giant. He raises the bed post for a mighty whack. Ernie's feet get tangled in the blanket. He falls flat on his face. THWACK!

The mouse races out of the room into the hall.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

The mouse scrambles down the hall and ducks into Ernie's bedroom under the crack of the closed door. Ernie tumbles out of Lars' room just in time to see the mouse's tail disappear under his door.

Ernie races for his bedroom. Charging at his door like a linebacker...

INT. ERNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SMASH! The door splinters off its hinges. Ernie falls in face-first.

He looks desperately everywhere for the mouse. Tears off all his covers. Scrambles under the bed. Nowhere.

ERNIE

(raving)

Where are you, you little demon? You monster?

His eye shoots to the heating vent in his ceiling. The same place the mouse peeked out before.

ERNIE

Ah-ha!

Ernie throws a chair under the vent and climbs up onto its back. Precariously balanced, he tugs and pulls at the grate. In a shower of plaster, he rips it from its frame exposing the open duct.

ERNIE

I know you're in there, punk!

Suddenly, a sound...ZZZZZZZZZZ! Ernie turns his head quickly.

Taxiing off the hobby table, the mouse, having commandeered the repaired model biplane, soars into the air and takes flight in the battery-powered aircraft.

The flying mouse zooms right for Ernie's face.

ERNIE

NOOOO!

Ducking the propeller, Ernie cranes backward, loses his balance, and falls flat on his back destroying his hobby table again.

The little plane dive-bombs right for Ernie. Ernie rolls for cover and quickly scurries out of the bedroom on his hands and knees.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

As Ernie scrambles down the hall, the mouse-piloted plane banks out of the bedroom and barrel rolls down the length of the hall after him.

Ernie clamors down the stairs just as Lars is racing up. They hit full-force into each other and tumble down in a rolling ball of arms and feet.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Lars and Ernie somersault onto the floor hard. Lars quickly jumps to his feet, a raving psychotic. The plane dive-bombs down the stairs, right for his face. He ducks out of the way just in the nick of time.

LARS

What the hell?!

ERNIE

(screams)

He's a kamikaze mouse!

The plane loop-de-loops and doubles back for him a second time.

Ernie leaps to his feet. Lars tosses him the sledge hammer.

LARS

(shrills)

Take no prisoners!

Lars quickly switches the knob on the vacuum cleaner from "suck" to "blow." He flips it on. A mist of gasoline shoots out the nozzle. He lights it with his long-necked spark starter. Instant flame thrower.

VVRRROOOOMMM! The mini biplane cat and mouses them again. Lars shoots a burst of fire at the enemy. The plane evades the billow of flame. But the curtains erupt instantly.

Ernie swings the sledge hammer at the erratic flymouse. He misses, but SMACK, hits Lars right in the face. Lars flies backward in a daze and lands in the living room.

Ernie chases the soaring model swinging the sledge hammer out-of-control. He chases him into the...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lars jumps to his feet and shakes the canaries out of his head. The plane is coming right at him. Thinking fast, he blasts at the mouse with the flame thrower. WOOSH!

The plane spirals up missing the fire, but the rolling inferno hits Ernie right in the face. His hair and some of the furniture catch.

ERNIE

AAAHHH!

Ernie rolls like a maniac on the floor putting out his face as Lars continues blasting at the zigzagging plane with arcs of fire.

Ernie, practically hairless, his eyebrows gone, GASPS for breath on the floor. He looks left just in time to see...

ERNIE'S POV - The runaway chainsaw zooming right for his face.

ERNIE

AAAAHHH!

Ernie jumps out of the way just as the wayward spinning blade slice off the toes of Lars' shoes. Lars SCREAMS. He looks up. Out of the smoke the plane power dives right at Lars. He aims the flame thrower for another blast.

WOOSH! A stream of fire shoots across the room. The biplane banks to avoid it. No luck. The tail gets hit. It catches. The flaming aircraft loops for another attack. Black smoke trails behind.

The rabid chainsaw slices across the floor toward Ernie again. He grabs the sledge hammer.

The plane snap rolls right for Lars' face. He readies the torch. POOF. Just a smoke ring comes out. No more gas.

The model BUZZES directly at him. Lars' eyes bulge.

Wielding the sledge hammer like a mighty golf club, Ernie swings at the manic chainsaw.

ERNIE

FORE!

SLAM! The sledge hammer whacks the chainsaw full-force. The runaway power tool flies through the air spinning.

Just as the mouse plane is about to hit Lars square in the face, the hurling chainsaw sails in front of Lars' nose, missing him by an inch. The blade clips a wing of the biplane sending the tiny craft into a flaming tailspin.

The chainsaw flies out the picture window.

Lars and Ernie watch as the out-of-control plane SPITS, SPUTTERS, and dive bombs for the floor. It nose dives right through the gaping hole in the living room floor and into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The biplane dives right into the ancient furnace. Instantly, BOOOM! The boiler explodes with Greek God-like rage.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The floor around Ernie and Lars disintegrates in a hail of fire and gas.

LARS/ERNIE

Oh, shit!

EXT. SMUNTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

KA-BOOOOOM! The entire house blows up Joel Silver-style. Vaporized into a shower of flaming debris.

The explosion illuminates the night sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE SUN SLOWLY CREEPS OVER THE HORIZON

Morning light brightens the winter wonderland. A light snow flurries down.

EXT. VACANT LOT WHERE SMUNTZ HOUSE ONCE STOOD - SUNRISE

The top of the little hill is merely a large, charred, black smudge. Nothing is left. The entire house is demolished.

Lars and Ernie, half-naked, half-bald, and totally blackened with soot, sit silently amid the rubble shivering.

Just then, a group of cars and a van reading ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST on the side, come around the corner and pull up the driveway.

Lars and Ernie rise, wide-eyed, as a PHOTOGRAPHER and CREW pile out of the vehicles. Roxanne Atkins, the woman from the magazine, stares at the holocaust. She's dumbfounded.

There's a long, uncomfortable beat.

Roxanne, the photographer, and the crew quietly get back into their vehicles, turn around and drive away. The brothers are left alone again.

LARS

Oh, yeah, February 15th. I forgot they were coming.

Lars and Ernie just stand there like a couple of morons.

CUT TO:

SLAM!

The door to the green Bronco is pulled closed.

INT. GREEN BRONCO - MORNING

Lars starts the car. Both brothers are in shock. Dazed.

ERNIE

What do we do now?

LARS

I don't know.

ERNIE

Well, we still got the business. Maybe with a little hard work and elbow grease we can turn Smuntz String around.

LARS

What do you mean we? What about your restaurant?

ERNIE

I'll open a little lunch counter for the workers. It's a start. All we got is each other, right?

LARS

Right. I suppose we can sleep in the office for a while. We can save some money that way and I'll finally be able to put in that intercom system.

ERNIE

You see...

(sighs)

We were almost rich.

LARS

I knew we shoulda sold when we had the chance. We coulda had ten million dollars.

ERNIE

Maybe the whole thing was just a dream?
Maybe we never really had a house that
was worth all that money? Maybe we just
imagined that mouse?

LARS

Well, maybe we lost it all, but at least
we killed that damn pest.

Both brothers smile happy. They hi-five.

ERNIE

Yeah. He's dead! Hurray!

They both start SINGING as Lars pulls away.

LARS/ERNIE

(delirious; singing)

"Ding, dong, the mouse is dead. Which
old mouse?...The wicked mouse...Ding,
dong, the wicked mouse is dead!"

EXT. GREEN BRONCO - MORNING

As the Bronco pulls away, we hear the brothers continue SINGING.

CAMERA MOVES AROUND THE SIDE OF THE CAR to the back bumper. As
it turns onto the main road, we see the mouse clutching the
undercarriage of the vehicle with evil intent (ala "Cape Fear").

The rodent looks DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA and SNICKERS sinisterly.

The Bronco accelerates and disappears around a bend toward
Boston.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END: