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# Big ... Bad ... Mouse!

A Farce

Philip King and Falkland L. Cary  
Based on an idea by Ivan Butler

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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ISBN 978-0-573-01532-8

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# BIG . . . BAD . . . MOUSE!

Presented by Michael Codron in association with A.L.S. Presentations Ltd at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, on 17th October 1966, with the following cast of characters:

*(in order of their appearance)*

FIONA JONES	<i>Anna Carteret</i>
HAROLD HOPKINS	<i>Bunny May</i>
MISS SPENCER	<i>Elspeth Duxbury</i>
MR PRICE-HARGRAVES	<i>Jimmy Edwards</i>
MR BLOOME	<i>Eric Sykes</i>
LADY CHESAPEAKE	<i>Joan Young</i>
DORIS POVEY	<i>Clovissa Newcombe</i>

The play directed by ALEXANDER DORÉ

Setting by BRIAN CURRAH

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

*The action of the play passes in the Orders office of  
Chunkibix Limited*

### ACT I

- SCENE 1 9 a.m. on a morning in December  
SCENE 2 9 a.m. the following morning

### ACT II

- SCENE 1 Around midnight following evening  
SCENE 2 9 a.m. the following morning

*Time—the present*



## ACT I

### SCENE I

SCENE—*An office in a large block occupied by Chunkibix Ltd. Nine o'clock on a morning in early December.*

*The office is a bright and cheerful place, with large windows across the back and R walls. The main door opens up RC on to a small alcove, and another door down R leads to an inner office. A massive and imposing desk stands LC, and a much plainer and humbler one R. A small desk for a secretary is up C, against the wall of the alcove and with its chair back to the window. There is a hatstand up LC, and a filing cabinet R of the main door.*

*When the CURTAIN rises, the room is empty. After a moment FIONA JONES dashes in through the main door. She is about eighteen years old, madly modern in her attire and outlook—somewhat dumb, but very pretty. She wears a revealing blouse and skirt and carries a large, gaily-coloured bag and a duster. Immediately on her entrance she throws the duster on to Mr Bloome's desk, R, consults her wristlet watch and, presumably, checks with a clock on the "fourth wall". She then dives into the large bag and produces a transistor wireless set, puts it on the desk, drops the bag on the floor, and switches the set on. She then picks up her duster and begins flicking dust off the desk. As soon as the radio is switched on an ANNOUNCER is heard.*

ANNOUNCER. . . . that the record she has asked me to play for you will help restore you to your usual sunny self. What is the record?

FIONA. Well, what is it, for heaven's sake?

ANNOUNCER. It's none other than the—(*his voice rising*)—The Twaddlers! (*Or any contemporary pop group*)

(*FIONA gives a loud, strangled, agonized cry of ecstasy*)

The Twaddlers! In their very latest recording—"Hootah, hootah, choo, choo, choo!"

(*There is another scream from FIONA, and immediately a loud noise comes from the transistor—guitars, the Mersey Sound, and a nerve-racking, thumping beat. FIONA, with yet another wild cry, flings the duster into the air, then flings herself into a madly acrobatic, strenuous and abandoned version of "The Twaddlers", squawking loudly as she does so. Almost immediately the door up RC opens and HAROLD HOPKINS appears. He is a pale-faced, bespectacled lad of nineteen or so. He is carrying a folder filled with letters. On seeing the door open, FIONA stops "twisting" for the tenth of a second, but on seeing Harold her alarm vanishes and the dancing*

is renewed, more energetically than ever. "On-the-ball Harold" takes in the situation at once. With a blood-curdling whoop he throws the folder deskwards. It misses the large desk and falls to the floor. HAROLD rushes towards Fiona, faces her, and immediately joins in the wild cavorting, which goes on until the record—after one chorus only—fades out and the ANNOUNCER'S voice is heard again. Immediately, the dancing stops, HAROLD drops to his hands and knees quickly and begins to pick up the letters. FIONA switches off the transistor)

FIONA (*squirming*) Oh, Harold, aren't they fab!

HAROLD. I say! Won't Miss Spencer be in any minute now?

FIONA. Well, get you, Harold Hopkins! Scared of old "droopy-drawers" Spencer! (*Witheringly*) Honestly, I don't know!

HAROLD (*picking up letters*) Don't know what?

FIONA. What I see in you, or why I bother about you. I mean to say—just look at you!

(HAROLD looks at himself as much as possible)

When I think of all the boys I know—you know, smashin' lookers—and then I have to go and fall for a drip like you!

HAROLD (*grinning*) P'raps I've got hidden charms!

FIONA. Where do you hide them? (*Quickly*) Stop! I don't want to know. (*Smiling at him*) Come here, Harold!

HAROLD. I must get these letters sorted before . . . (*Looking at a letter as he rises*) Cor, old Meggitts don't half splash with their envelopes, do they!

FIONA (*exasperated*) Oh my . . . ! (*She moves quickly to Harold and plants a fervent, lingering kiss on his lips*)

(HAROLD tries to protest at first, then yields to Fiona's ardour. Letters slide from the folder to the floor, the folder follows them. HAROLD tries to disentangle himself from Fiona's embrace)

HAROLD (*weakly*) The letters—if Miss Spencer—if Mr Price-Hargraves . . .

FIONA (*firmly*) Now you kiss me!

HAROLD. I—I—oh hell! (*He seizes FIONA and, bending her backwards, kisses her in what he imagines to be a "film-star" manner. It is a rather clumsy, though sincere effort*)

FIONA (*with a squeak*) Oo! My back!

(*They break away*)

(*Her hands on her back*) Ouch! (*Smiling*) Not bad, Harold, for nine o'clock in the morning.

(HAROLD staggers almost drunkenly to the large desk, clutches it for support, and wipes his brow with a handkerchief)

(*Brightly*) Well, now I feel ready to cope with Miss Spencer, Mr Price-Hargraves, Mr Bloome, Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all!

HAROLD (*weakly*) Well, I don't! (*With a yelp*) The letters! (*He totters towards them, kneels, and picks them up*)

(*The telephone on the desk LC rings. FIONA answers it*)

FIONA. Orders Department. Mr Price-Hargraves' and Mr Bloome's office . . . Miss Spencer? . . . No, she isn't in yet, but I suppose you'd better put 'em through . . . Hullo? . . . No, I'm sorry, Miss Spencer isn't in yet. Can I give her a message? (*She props a compact on the desk and uses her lipstick while she talks*) Yes, I'll tell her and that you'll ring again. 'Bye! (*She replaces the receiver*) A private call for Miss Spencer. Can you imagine the row there'd be if anybody rang me up here? (*Indicating the letters*) Hey! There seems to be a lot of letters this morning!

HAROLD (*grinning*) There are!

FIONA (*with a snort*) And I'm on my own! Maudie Arnold went home with a stinking cold last night. And I'll bet most of those—(*indicating letters*)—are for old Price-Hargraves.

HAROLD. What difference does that make? You type Mr Bloome's letters as well, don't you?

FIONA (*contemptuously*) He'll be lucky if he gets any done today. Price-Hargraves'll see to it his are done first. (*She moves away R*)

HAROLD (*putting some letters on the desk LC*) Funny chap, Bloome—the way he lets Price-Hargraves boss him around. And the way Miss Spencer treats him—as if he wasn't there.

FIONA. He isn't—as far as she's concerned, you clot! Can't you see it's Price-Hargraves is her pin-up? Harold, you're just too innocent for this world!

HAROLD. Innocent, me! (*He gives a low growl, grabs Fiona, and once again gives her his film-star kiss*)

(*MISS SPENCER enters up RC. She is a thin spinster in her forties, very business-like, but very feminine in her devotion to Mr Price-Hargraves. She is in outdoor clothes, and carries a shopping bag*)

MISS SPENCER (*seeing Fiona and Harold locked in embrace*) Oh!

(*FIONA and HAROLD break apart*)

(*Moving between them; horrified*) Miss Jones!!

FIONA (*in a dither*) I—good morning, Miss Spencer.

HAROLD (*also dithering*) Er—'morning, Miss Spencer.

MISS SPENCER. Such outrageous conduct, and in Mr Price-Hargraves' office, and in the firm's time! Really—you teenagers. No sense of decency—no morals. Fling ourselves into the arms of the opposite sex on every possible occasion. (*To Harold*) Remove yourself from this office immediately. (*She puts her shopping bag on her chair up C and hangs her coat on the stand*)

HAROLD. Yes, Miss Spencer.

MISS SPENCER. Have you sorted the letters out?

HAROLD. Yes, Miss Spencer. (*Putting some of the letters on the desk R*) These are Mr Bloome's.

MISS SPENCER (*with a snort*) Never mind Mr Bloome's. (*Moving above the desk LC*) Are these for Mr Price-Hargraves?

HAROLD. Yes, Miss Spencer.

MISS SPENCER. Then you may go.

HAROLD. Yes, Miss Spencer.

MISS SPENCER (*picking up a small vase with drooping flowers in it, from the desk LC*) Oh! You can throw these away for me, please, and put fresh water in the vase.

(HAROLD takes the vase and moves to the door down R)

Miss Jones!

HAROLD. Yes, Miss Spencer. (*Realizing his mistake*) Oh!

(HAROLD exits down R. FIONA picks up her duster)

MISS SPENCER. You have quite enough to be getting on with, Miss Jones. You know Miss Arnold won't be in today.

FIONA (*dusting*) Thank goodness for that. If you'd heard her sniffing all day yesterday—got on my nerves.

MISS SPENCER. Have you dusted the desks?

FIONA. I've done Mr Bloome's. I haven't got round to Mr Price-Hargraves' yet.

MISS SPENCER (*almost in a panic*) Not—got round to . . . ? Good heavens, girl! (*She snatches the duster and starts to give Fiona everything on the desk, dusting as she does so*)

FIONA (*plaintively*) I've only one pair of hands, Miss Spencer.

MISS SPENCER. Surely you know you should have done Mr Price-Hargraves first? These books are covered in dust. Here, hold this. (*She hands a blotter to Fiona and dusts frantically*) What on earth would he think if he came in and found his desk . . . (*She hands a letter-tray to Fiona*) And this. (*She works round L of the desk and below it*)

FIONA (*moving down R of the desk*) I don't suppose he'd notice—men never do.

MISS SPENCER (*still dusting frantically; with a tremendous sigh*) Mr Price-Hargraves is not like other men.

(MR PRICE-HARGRAVES is heard off in the corridor—a loud and hearty voice)

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*off; some way down the corridor*) Ah! Mornin', Tattersall.

VOICE (*off*) Morning, P.H.!

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*off, approaching*) Morning, J.D.!

MISS SPENCER (*in ecstasy*) Mr Price-Hargraves! (*She drops the duster and crawls under the knee-hole of the desk to retrieve it*)

(FIONA drops everything back on the desk and moves below Bloome's desk R)

VOICE (*off*) 'Morning, P.H.

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*off; heartily*) Has the Sanderson order gone off?

VOICE (*off*) Last night.

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*off*) Good show, J.D. Good show!

(PRICE-HARGRAVES *enters up RC, closing the door behind him. He is pompous, fiftyish, perhaps fat and bald. He wears a bowler and carries umbrella and briefcase*)

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*moving down C, looking unconsciously at Miss Spencer's posterior and speaking automatically*) Good show, Miss Spencer, good show!

(MISS SPENCER *straightens up swiftly and stands below the desk*)

'Mornin', Miss Spencer. 'Mornin', Miss Jones.

(HAROLD *bursts in from the door down R as Price-Hargraves speaks, carrying the small vase filled with water. He trips over the waste-paper basket below the desk R, and as he falls, throws the water over Price-Hargraves' trousers*)

HAROLD (*as he enters*) Here we are, Miss Spencer. The . . . Oh, sorry, sir!

(FIONA *picks up her bag*)

PRICE-HARGRAVES. Dammit, boy! (*Fuming*) Look at my trousers! I'm soaked!

MISS SPENCER (*wildly*) Oh, Mr Price-Hargraves!

HAROLD. I'm sorry I—I—I . . .

PRICE-HARGRAVES. Soaked!

MISS SPENCER. Oh, Mr Price-Hargraves, let me . . . (*She grabs the duster, rushes to Price-Hargraves, kneels and begins to rub his trousers vigorously*)

PRICE-HARGRAVES. Higher, Miss Spencer.

(MISS SPENCER *starts to raise the duster too high*)

Miss Spencer!

(MISS SPENCER *drops the duster. HAROLD starts to polish Price-Hargraves' shoes. PRICE-HARGRAVES holds his wet trousers away from his leg*)

(*To Hopkins*) Hopkins, leave this room! *Out!*

HAROLD. Yes, sir!

(HAROLD, *in his agitation, hands the vase to Price-Hargraves, and rushes out of the office down R*)

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*unconscious of the vase*) Has everyone gone mad this morning? (*Glaring at Fiona*) What is that girl standing there like that for? *Out!*

(FIONA exits hurriedly down R)

(Realizing he is holding the vase; incensed) What the—where did this come from?

MISS SPENCER (almost wailing) Oh, give it to me, Mr Price-Hargraves. I'll put it down. (She takes the vase and puts it on the desk LC)

(PRICE-HARGRAVES takes blotting paper from the desk R and puts it down inside his trousers. All his movements are governed by the fact that he has to walk with the blotting paper inside his trouser leg)

PRICE-HARGRAVES. I won't ask what has been going on in here. Perhaps you will enlighten me in your own good time. (He wriggles uncomfortably)

(MISS SPENCER starts to speak)

But not now, if you don't mind. (He hangs up his hat and umbrella) We have an extremely busy day in front of us. I see Mr Bloome hasn't arrived yet. (Moving down RC) Surely he is not favouring us with the pleasure of his absence for the day?

MISS SPENCER. If you remember, Mr Price-Hargraves, you suggested he call at Watkins Ltd, on his way to the office—about their invoices. (She moves to her desk)

PRICE-HARGRAVES. H'mm. I think I'd better get rid of an invoice myself. (He turns his back on the audience, removes the blotting paper and throws it on Bloome's desk) H'mm. I seem to have blotted my copy-book. (Moving above his own desk LC) Ah well! Work! Work! Work! "Time and tide wait for no man", do they?

MISS SPENCER (agreeing madly) They don't indeed.

PRICE-HARGRAVES (gazing at his desk in horror) Miss Spencer!

MISS SPENCER (quivering) What? What, Mr Price-Hargraves?

(PRICE-HARGRAVES extends a hand silently and dramatically towards the chaos on his desk)

(With a cry of anguish) Oh! Oh, Mr Price-Hargraves! Your desk!

PRICE-HARGRAVES (solemnly, pompously) My desk, Miss Spencer.

MISS SPENCER. Oh—what can I say?

PRICE-HARGRAVES. Actions speak louder than words, Miss Spencer. (He moves majestically away to Bloome's desk)

(MISS SPENCER, almost in tears, begins feverishly to tidy the big desk)

(Surveying Bloome's desk, witheringly) Mr Bloome's desk is in perfect order, not a thing out of place. (Almost pained) I find that a little hard to bear, Miss Spencer, seeing that I do happen to be the senior occupant of this office. Perhaps Mr Bloome possesses some—er—endearing quality which I lack, though I cannot imagine what that could be! (He stands humming pompously)

(MISS SPENCER takes a bunch of flowers quickly from the shopping bag, thrusts them into the vase and puts them on the desk LC)

MISS SPENCER. Your desk is ready now, Mr Price-Hargraves.

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*with a frosty smile*) Better late than never, eh, Miss Spencer? Now perhaps we really *can* get down to some work. (*He sits at his desk*)

(MISS SPENCER *moves to her own desk*)

(*Holding up the pile of letters in a fan shape*) Quite a—er (*smiling fatuously*) a fan mail this morning, Miss Spencer. (*He beams at her, pleased with his joke*)

MISS SPENCER (*blankly*) Can't I deal with some of the letters for you?

PRICE-HARGRAVES. No, no! You know my golden rule. (*Very pompously*) When one has been chosen to hold a responsible position one should accept full responsibility. Our chairman, Lady Chesapeake, has honoured me with great responsibility. She feels I . . .

MISS SPENCER. I'm sure she values you enormously.

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*with relish*) She thinks I am a pearl of great price—Hargraves. (*He laughs again at his own joke*)

(MISS SPENCER, *after a blank moment, joins in*)

MISS SPENCER. Can't I . . . ?

PRICE-HARGRAVES. You can deal with Mr Bloome's. I'm sure his will be all rubbish.

MISS SPENCER (*unhappily*) Yes, Mr Price-Hargraves. (*She crosses to Bloome's desk and sits*)

(PRICE-HARGRAVES *briefly peruses each letter. As he does so he mumbles, starting, "Dear Chunkibix . . ." He puts one letter in the "Out" tray, another in the "In" tray, hesitates on the third and finally screws it up and throws it in the waste-paper basket. As he does so, his telephone rings*)

(*Leaping up*) Oh, shall I take it, Mr . . .

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*waving her away and lifting the receiver, speaking his hyphenated name with relish*) This is Price-Hargraves here . . . Who? . . . Miss Spencer? . . . *Who* wishes to speak to her? (*Not too pleased*) A private call for you, Miss Spencer.

MISS SPENCER. Oh, Mr Price-Hargraves—not during office hours—they can't—they shouldn't . . .

PRICE-HARGRAVES. They *have*. (*Into the phone; coldly*) Put this call through to Mr Bloome's desk, will you? (*He gestures grandly to Miss Spencer*)

MISS SPENCER (*gibbering*) Oh, but Mr Price-Hargraves—I don't know that I ought to take the call. It isn't right—during working hours. I—I . . . (*She lifts the receiver at Bloome's desk, waiting for the call*)

PRICE-HARGRAVES. Oh, take the call! Shall I leave the room?

MISS SPENCER. Oh, no, not unless you need to—(*confused*)—want to, I mean.

PRICE-HARGRAVES (*coldly*) I don't.

MISS SPENCER (*into the phone*) Hullo, who's that? . . . Doris? (*To Price-Hargraves*) My niece. Doris, what on earth are you doing,

# WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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