

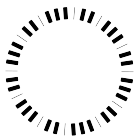
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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

BLIND ALLEY

by Jack Popplewell

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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The song **"IF I SHOULD FALL IN LOVE AGAIN"** was written and composed by Jack Popplewell. The publishers are The Peter Maurice Music Co., Ltd, 22 Berners Street, London, United Kingdom, W1T 3LP, London.

CHARACTERS

(in the order of their appearance)

JOHNNY FARRELL	}	brothers
DAVE FARRELL		
MIKE FARRELL		
"CALICO"		
MRS FINNEGAN		
PATRICK RYAN		
AN OLD MAN		

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

*The action of the Play passes in the living-room of the Farrells' lodgings
in a midland city*

ACT I

SCENE 1 A spring evening

SCENE 2 An evening, three weeks later

ACT II

Morning, a fortnight later

ACT III.

SCENE 1 Morning, three days later

SCENE 2 Morning, three days later

Time—the present

BLIND ALLEY

ACT I

SCENE I

SCENE—*The living-room of the Farrells' lodgings in a midland city. A spring evening.*

There are windows LC and RC of the back wall showing the dingy roofs of the dingy city. A door down R leads to the landing and main entrance, and a door up R leads to a bedroom. The fireplace is L and there is a sink in the corner up L. There are various articles of inexpensive furniture. A divan RC; a sideboard R; a table and three chairs LC; easy chairs above and below the fireplace; a small chair down R and a gramophone up R. The room is lit by an electric pendant C.

(See the Ground Plan at the end of the Play)

When the CURTAIN rises, the window curtains are open but the light is on and a fire burns in the grate. A violin can be heard off, the melody is "If I Should Fall in Love Again". DAVE FARRELL is seated above the table, finishing his supper of bread, cheese and tea. He is a slight, nervous youth, aged nineteen. He is a clerk in the offices of Mallaby's Iron Foundry. His clothes are neat, clerkly and inconspicuous. JOHNNY FARRELL, Dave's elder brother, is standing by the window up RC, gazing out. He is tall, attractive and well-dressed. He has a city air about him, in marked contrast to Dave and the eldest brother Mike. JOHNNY is slick, intelligent, but at the moment, unsuccessful.

JOHNNY (*turning and moving LC*) You've got a wonderful place here, Dave. H. and C., all mod. cons., and Kreisler to give recitals underneath your window (*He moves down L*)

DAVE (*smiling*) He's about a hundred years old.

JOHNNY. And still learning.

DAVE. He only knows one tune.

JOHNNY (*moving up C*) Doesn't he get tired of hearing it? (*He moves up RC*)

DAVE. Maybe he doesn't listen. He stands at the corner of the street. He's harmless.

(The violin music gradually diminishes in volume until it is no longer audible)

JOHNNY. A beggar and his fiddle, eh? What a life!

DAVE. Are you sure you won't have anything to eat?

JOHNNY (*looking through the window up RC; abstracted*) I had a meal before I came up here.

DAVE. It's lousy cheese, but the tea's all right.

JOHNNY. The place hasn't changed, Dave. Same old skyline.

DAVE. Beautiful, isn't it?

JOHNNY. I always hated it.

DAVE. So do I.

JOHNNY. It is an industrial city with a population of four hundred thousand. A centre of the automobile industry. Lovers of antiquity will find interest in an old abbey knocked over by Oliver Cromwell in ten-sixty-six.

DAVE (*smiling*). What're you reading from?

JOHNNY. The Town Hall is a splendid example of advanced construction which created enormous discussion when formally opened in seventeen-eighty-three by William the Conqueror.

DAVE. Is that in the guide book?

JOHNNY. What a dump. (*He moves down C*)

DAVE. Not like London, eh, Johnny? Why have you come back?

JOHNNY (*crossing down L*). I had to. It's my spiritual home.

DAVE. How?

JOHNNY (*moving to the fireplace*). It's a second-rate town. I'm a second-rater. So we belong together.

DAVE. I thought you were getting along fine.

JOHNNY. I was.

DAVE. What happened?

JOHNNY. Oh, a long run of losers. I lost five hundred at Ascot. Three at Lincoln. A packet at Windsor. I hadn't enough wool on my back to stand it.

DAVE. Oh.

JOHNNY (*moving to the chair L of the table*). If I hadn't left quietly, I'd have had a civic send-off. I owe every bookie in town. They're after my blood. (*He turns the chair and sits astride it, the wrong way round, resting his arms on the back*) What about you and Mike? How's things?

DAVE. Oh—routine. Nothing ever happens. You know.

JOHNNY. What do you do?

DAVE. We're at Mallaby's.

JOHNNY. Mallaby's Foundry?

DAVE. Yes.

JOHNNY. Employ a lot of men, don't they?

DAVE. Couple of thousand.

JOHNNY. You're in the office?

DAVE (*nodding agreeably*). It isn't exciting.

JOHNNY. What's Mike do?

DAVE. He's in the Yard. It's heavy work, but he's well paid.

JOHNNY. He'll be foreman, eh?

DAVE. He was. If things don't suit him he flies off the handle. That doesn't make him popular.

JOHNNY. Throws his weight about, you mean?

DAVE. Nobody'll work under him.

JOHNNY. So he's back in the ranks. Mike always had a grievance against the world. Now he'll have another.

DAVE. Mr D'Arcy's looked after him.

JOHNNY (*enthusiastically*) Old D'Arcy!

DAVE. He knew Mike when he was a baby. He's the only one who can handle him. When they give Mike his cards Mr D'Arcy puts in a word for him and then kids him into staying on. Mike thinks he's doing *him* a favour.

JOHNNY (*smiling*) Poor Mike! Poor, dumb, quarrelsome, mis-understood Mike.

(DAVE rises, picks up his cup and saucer, goes to the sink and rinses them)

DAVE. There's one bit of news that'll knock you over.

JOHNNY. What?

DAVE. He's going to be married.

JOHNNY (*alarmed*) Who?

DAVE. Mike.

JOHNNY. No!

DAVE (*wiping the cup and saucer*) Yes, sir. He's going to be married.

JOHNNY (*laughing*) He never had a girl in his life.

DAVE (*crossing with the cup and saucer to the sideboard*) He's got one now. (*He puts the cup and saucer in the sideboard cupboard*)

JOHNNY (*rising*) Well, well, well! (*He turns the chair*)

DAVE (*turning from the sideboard*) I'm glad you're back, Johnny, because I'm worried about it. Perhaps you can do something.

JOHNNY (*crossing to the divan; puzzled*) What about? (*He takes a newspaper from his overcoat pocket*)

DAVE (*moving to R of the divan*) About Mike and—and this girl.

JOHNNY. Who? Me?

DAVE. Yes, Johnny.

JOHNNY (*facing Dave*) You mean interfere?

DAVE (*nodding*) She's no good, Johnny. She's no good at all.

JOHNNY (*putting the paper on the divan*) What can I do? (*He picks up his overcoat and hat from the divan*)

DAVE (*awkwardly*) You might talk him out of it.

JOHNNY (*moving up c and hanging his coat and hat on the hooks*) I might talk myself into a thick ear.

DAVE (*following Johnny up c*) He'd listen to you. He always did.

JOHNNY (*turning to face Dave*) What's wrong with her?

DAVE (*crossing to the fireplace; embarrassed*) I don't know. It's—something about her. She's . . . Johnny, I can't describe it. Just something. (*Hastily*) He spends all his money on her.

JOHNNY. He's twenty-one, Dave. (*He moves above the table*) In fact he's thirty-one. You're nineteen. He's supposed to know his own mind.

DAVE. I knew more about women when I was thirteen than he'll ever know. He's a dope. She's making a fool out of him. Somebody ought to do something. *(He sits in the easy chair down L.)*

JOHNNY. What's she look like?

DAVE. You'll see—she'll be along. He's crazy about her.

JOHNNY *(moving down LC)* Pretty?

DAVE. She's all right to look at.

JOHNNY. I can't imagine old Mike with a girl. Not a pretty one. *(He crosses down R)* Some old cow, maybe, but not an attractive one. What's her name.

DAVE. Calico.

JOHNNY. Calico? That isn't a name.

DAVE. She comes from Liverpool. Her grandfather was a Spaniard, or a Mexican or something. It's Gallegos, really, but it isn't easy to say. What they called her sounded like Calico and it stuck.

JOHNNY *(moving C)* What's she doing in this back-of-the-woods town?

DAVE. Hell, I don't know, Johnny. Wait till you see her. She was a chorus girl—or something—and came here in a dud show—got stranded.

JOHNNY. And settled here?

DAVE. Something like that. Her real name's Helen.

JOHNNY *(moving to the divan and lying on it)* Well, look, Dave, if Mike wants to marry her it's his own affair. Not yours. Not mine. I'll give you some advice. Never interfere between a woman and her baby, and a man and his girl. You get no medals for it. And you might get a broken neck. *(He looks at his newspaper)*

DAVE. Wait till you see her.

JOHNNY. I'm waiting.

DAVE *(rising and moving up C)* Anyhow, I'm glad you're back. What're you going to do?

JOHNNY. I haven't decided.

DAVE. I could speak to Mr D'Arcy.

JOHNNY. What about?

DAVE. A job for you. With us.

JOHNNY. At Mallaby's?

DAVE. Why not?

JOHNNY *(lowering his paper)* Yes. *(He pauses. Thoughtfully)* That's nice of you, Dave. But I have a couple of quid left. When I take a job I want to be sure it's the right one. I'll take a look around, first. See what I mean? *(He returns to his paper)*

(Footsteps and voices are heard off R)

MRS FINNEGAN *(off)* No consideration for my rheumatism. Doors open all over the house.

MIKE *(off)* Did I leave the door open, Mrs Finnegan? That's twice in one day—it's lucky.

DAVE (*crossing to the door down R*) Sounds like Mike. (*He opens the door*)

(MIKE FARRELL *enters down R. He is an exceptionally big and powerful man, aged thirty-one. He carries his coat and wears a hat which he does not remove. He crosses to LC and puts his coat on the chair L of the table*)

(*He closes the door*) Johnny's back.

JOHNNY (*rising and moving C*) How're you, Mike, you big elephant?

MIKE (*moving to L of Johnny and hugging him*) We-l-l! (*He smiles broadly*) All dressed up, he is. Ruddy capitalist. So you've come slumming, eh?

JOHNNY. That's right, Mike (*He puts his paper on the table*)

MIKE. One half of the world doesn't know how the other half lives, eh?

JOHNNY. They do their best to find out.

MIKE (*shaking Johnny by the hand*) Well, it's good to see you. What brings you back? Police after you?

JOHNNY. Not yet.

MIKE (*circling Johnny*) You look prosperous. Yes, sir, you've done well for yourself.

JOHNNY. I'm broke.

MIKE. No?

JOHNNY. Very broke.

(MIKE, *chuckling with amusement, sits R of the table and helps himself to bread and cheese*)

MIKE. You haven't changed a bit.

JOHNNY. Neither have you. You still behave like a drunken Irishman. (*To Dave*) Does he go to bed wearing his hat?

MIKE (*grinning*) I catch cold without it.

JOHNNY (*crossing to LC*) Doesn't he even take it off for his girl, Dave? (*To Mike*) They tell me you got yourself a girl, Mike.

MIKE. That's so, Johnny.

JOHNNY. Where is she?

MIKE. She's coming. She's gone up to her room first.

JOHNNY. She lives here?

DAVE (*crossing to the easy chair down L*) Upstairs. That's how we met her. (*He sits*)

JOHNNY. I see. Well, I want to meet her, too.

MIKE. She's coming. (*He rises and moves to the sideboard. To Dave*) Why isn't there any beer poured out? We've got a guest. Where's your manners?

DAVE. He wouldn't have any beer.

MIKE. He will now.

DAVE. We haven't any.

MIKE. Well, fetch some. (*He moves down R*)

DAVE. With what? I'm broke. This is Wednesday—not Friday.

JOHNNY (*moving c*) Look, boys, this is on me.

MIKE (*moving rc*) It isn't, you know. (*He fumbles in his pocket. To Dave*) How much have you got?

DAVE. Two and fourpence ha'penny. And I need my bus fare in the morning.

MIKE (*to Johnny*) He's a mean little skinflint. You wouldn't believe it.

DAVE (*to Johnny*) I earn six-ten a week. He can make nine. If he didn't throw it all away on *her* he wouldn't have to sponge on me.

MIKE (*crossing to Dave; angrily*) Why you little . . .

JOHNNY (*smiling placatingly*) Break it up there. Remember Ma's motto on the wall. "Let Brotherly Love Continue." I said it's on me. (*He takes a note from his pocket*)

MIKE (*to Dave*) One of these days I'm going to put you across my knee and smack the daylight out of you.

DAVE (*rising*) He's always broke. She gets every penny.

JOHNNY (*crossing quickly to Dave*) Here, take this. (*He gives the note to Dave*) Go wherever you do go and get some beer. It's my treat.

DAVE (*crossing to c*) It's just round the corner.

JOHNNY (*pushing Dave down r*) That's fine. Run along, Dave.

(*DAVE exits down r. MIKE crosses to the sideboard, picks up a packet of cigarettes and offers them to Johnny. JOHNNY strikes a match and they both light up*)

When are you planning to get married, Mike? Soon?

MIKE (*slowly*) We've no plans. (*He crosses, picks up his coat and hangs it on the hooks*)

JOHNNY (*moving to the table*) Can you afford it. (*He sits r of the table and picks up his newspaper*)

MIKE (*crossing to the fireplace*) No. (*Quickly*) But I will.

JOHNNY. You'll need plenty.

MIKE. I'll get it. How long are you back for, Johnny?

JOHNNY. I don't know.

MIKE. You say you're broke?

JOHNNY. Flat. I owe a thousand pounds or more.

MIKE (*whistling incredulously*) Whew! You had a good time, didn't you? Women?

JOHNNY. Fast women and slow horses.

MIKE. Yes. You always were the gambler.

JOHNNY. Mike, is it true you're spending everything on your girl? I mean—everything.

MIKE (*turning and kneeling at the fire*) It's my own money. (*He pokes the fire*)

JOHNNY. I'm not lecturing. I'm asking.

MIKE. I don't like to be mean. You know me.

JOHNNY. If she's keen to be married she won't want you to throw it away.

MIKE. She's young, Johnny. She's just a kid.

JOHNNY (*rising and moving c*) What d'you buy? Furniture?

(MIKE is silent)

(*He moves up c*) I guess it isn't my business. I'm sorry.

MIKE. Johnny, she's pretty. I like to give her a good time. (*He rises and turns*) If I don't there's plenty who will.

JOHNNY (*moving down c*) Are you in love with her?

MIKE (*embarrassed*) She's so—so small, Johnny. I could break her in two so easy. Sometimes I'm afraid I will. And she's pretty. They call her Calico.

JOHNNY. It's a funny name.

MIKE. Yes. But it's cute. I like it.

JOHNNY (*crossing and sitting in the easy chair down L*) You're in love all right.

MIKE (*laughing*) I'm thirty-one. It's time, eh?

JOHNNY. I suppose so.

MIKE (*sitting in the easy chair LC*) She's been an actress. I never met an actress before. She works at a dance hall.

JOHNNY. Doing what?

MIKE. Dancing. She's a professional.

JOHNNY. You don't dance.

MIKE. No. I'm like a fish out of water. You can dance with her, Johnny. You were always keen, weren't you?

JOHNNY. Sometimes.

(*There is a knock at the door down R*)

Who's that?

(MIKE, beaming, rises, crosses to the door down R and opens it.

CALICO enters down R. She is slender and very attractive indeed. She wears a sweater and trousers. Her manner, contrary to the impression created of her, is not hard or tough. It is more apparently ingenuous. She crosses to RC. MIKE closes the door, moves to CALICO, stands beside her and they both look at JOHNNY, who rises. MIKE grins but cannot find words)

Well, come on. Introduce me to the lady.

MIKE (*holding Calico's hand*) This is my girl, Johnny. (*To Calico*) He's my brother. I told you about him.

JOHNNY. Hello, Calico.

CALICO. Hello—Johnny.

MIKE (*to Calico*) He's been living in London. Johnny's the smart one of the family.

JOHNNY. But I'm broke. So you really are called Calico?

CALICO (*moving c*) It's just a nickname.

MIKE. Calico—it's a piece of material.

JOHNNY. I'll say it is. Funny thing about women in men's jerseys. It makes 'em look more like women than ever.

MIKE (*shyly*) Look, I'll go after Dave. He can't carry a dozen bottles. You two get to know each other, eh?

JOHNNY. Don't be long. We're thirsty.

(MIKE *exits awkwardly down R*)

(*He takes a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and moves to L of Calico*)
Cigarette? (*He proffers the packet*)

CALICO (*taking a cigarette*) So you're Johnny?

JOHNNY. That's right.

CALICO. I've heard a lot about you.

JOHNNY. You beat me there. You came as a surprise.

CALICO. Why?

JOHNNY (*lighting her cigarette*) Mike never ran after girls.

CALICO. He has a lot to learn.

JOHNNY. Are you teaching him?

(CALICO *smiles*)

We're going to be relations, I'm told. You and I.

CALICO (*crossing below Johnny to the fireplace*) Are we?

JOHNNY. So they tell me.

CALICO. Do you approve?

JOHNNY. I don't know you.

CALICO. I'm easy to get to know. No frills. No tricks.

JOHNNY. Then you're not as feminine as you look.

(*There is a silence. JOHNNY thoughtfully surveys Calico*)

CALICO. What are you staring at me for?

JOHNNY. Just wondering.

CALICO. Wondering what?

JOHNNY. You know, Ma brought us three boys up. She was no bigger than you, and we were scared stiff of her. We loved her, too. She thought we were wonderful.

CALICO. She couldn't be mistaken.

JOHNNY (*sitting on the right arm of the easy chair LC*) Ma always thought I was the responsible one. Dave was nervy, liable to brainstorm: Mike, big and strong, but easily led. She reckoned Mike would get himself into trouble if she wasn't there to look after him.

CALICO. What are you getting at?

JOHNNY. I just want you to know Mike's background. Ma died a couple of years ago. Mike's older than I am but she made me promise I'd keep an eye on him. Help him. You know . . .

CALICO. You being the smart one.

JOHNNY. That's about it. You see . . .

CALICO. Why don't you say what's on your mind? I'm a simple

person, Johnny. I don't understand if I don't get it straight. Come on now. Let's have it.

JOHNNY. There's nothing on my mind, Calico. It's just—play the game with Mike, will you?

CALICO. Why shouldn't I?

JOHNNY. You know how it is—some girls are mercenary.

CALICO (*crossing to c*) So they tell me. So are some men. All men. For crying out loud, he's big enough to take care of himself, isn't he? Suppose I tell him what you said. What'll he think about it?

JOHNNY. He wouldn't think. His brain's practically unused.

CALICO (*sitting L of the table*) He'd pin your ears back. (*She smiles*) And you're kinda pretty. I wouldn't want him to hurt that profile. What have you got against me, anyway?

JOHNNY. Nothing. He's crazy about you. I only mean—if you're indifferent—don't take him too far along the road.

CALICO. He's a nice boy. He's got muscles like an all-in wrestler. And a heart as soft as butter. (*She fingers her scarf*) He bought me this.

(*JOHNNY ignores the scarf, rises, moves to Calico, takes her left wrist and gently raises it. A platinum and diamond wrist-watch can be seen*)

JOHNNY. This is nice. But *really* nice.

CALICO. I like it.

JOHNNY. I'll bet. (*He releases her wrist and moves up R*) Did Mike give it to you?

CALICO. What do *you* think?

JOHNNY. I hope he didn't.

CALICO. Why?

JOHNNY. Because I know something about those things. (*He moves down R*) I bought a girl a watch like that last year. I'd won a hell of a lot of money on the Derby.

CALICO. So what?

JOHNNY (*leaning on the down right corner of the table*) So Mike couldn't afford to buy it unless he held somebody up for the money.

CALICO (*thoughtfully surveying her watch*) Is it very good?

JOHNNY. Don't you know?

CALICO. I thought—maybe—thirty pounds.

JOHNNY (*laughing*) A hundred and thirty more like.

CALICO. You're kidding.

JOHNNY. Where did you get it?

CALICO (*evasively*) A friend. You sure about what you said?

JOHNNY. Of course I am. Close on two hundred. Those are diamonds. And platinum isn't picked up in the streets. (*He moves c*) Mike didn't give it to you, did he?

CALICO. I said not. A friend.

JOHNNY. You've got nice friends.

CALICO. Yes, I have.

JOHNNY (*crossing to L*) Lucky you!

CALICO (*rising*) Why don't you like me, Johnny?

JOHNNY. Who says I don't?

CALICO (*moving to R of him*) Talking about your mother. She wouldn't approve of me, would she?

JOHNNY. That's no criticism. Mothers only approve of the stay-at-home type. Then they're ready to hand over.

CALICO. But not to such as me.

JOHNNY. The peak of a mother's career is when the right person plucks the apple of her eye. (*He crosses to the fireplace*) You may be right, I don't know.

(DAVE and MIKE enter down R. Each carries six bottles of beer which they put on the table. CALICO goes to the sideboard, picks up a tray, takes four glasses from the sideboard cupboard and puts them on the table. MIKE gets a bottle opener from the sideboard, opens the bottles and DAVE fills three glasses)

MIKE. This is the stuff to give 'em.

CALICO. We thought you'd got lost.

MIKE. If I hadn't gone after him he'd have broken half of 'em.

DAVE (*L of the table*) I'm not a juggler. What's Calico drinking?

MIKE (*above the table*) She's drinking beer.

DAVE. How d'you know she is?

MIKE. 'Cos we've nothing else. It'll make her grow.

DAVE (*to Calico*) There's a bottle of sherry in my room. Wouldn't you rather . . . ?

MIKE. Sherry! Listen to him.

CALICO (*moving to R of the table*) I'll have beer. (*She pours a glass of beer for herself*)

MIKE. Good girl. (*To Dave*) I didn't know you'd a bottle of sherry.

DAVE. There's plenty you don't know. (*He picks up two glasses of beer, moves to Johnny, hands him a glass then moves down L*)

MIKE. What do you mean by that?

CALICO (*picking up her glass and moving down R; quickly*) He means nothing. Little Dave's in a bad temper, aren't you, Davey?

JOHNNY (*crossing to R of the table*) What's he in a bad temper about?

DAVE. Nothing. Come on, let's have a drink. (*He sits moodily in the easy chair down L*)

(MIKE sits above the table. JOHNNY sits R of the table)

JOHNNY. What're we drinking to?

MIKE. We don't need an excuse. (*He raises his glass*) To Calico. To the prettiest girl in the world.

CALICO (*raising her glass*) To the future.

DAVE. What's good about the future?

(CALICO *moves c*)

JOHNNY. The future's always good. It's bright and brilliant and wonderful. The present's lousy. But the future—that's terrific.

MIKE. To the future.

CALICO. Johnny's right. Here we go.

(*They drink enthusiastically. DAVE remains gloomy*)

JOHNNY. Dave, you're a misery. What's the matter with you?

DAVE. Nothing's the matter.

MIKE. Oh, never mind him. He sulks. He's like an old woman.

(CALICO *crosses to the easy chair LG and sits*)

DAVE. Why don't you leave me alone?

MIKE. You never know how he'll be next. He's either up or down. According to the moon.

CALICO (*laughing*) Poor Davey!

MIKE (*encouraged*) One day he's all right, the next he's got a sore tail. One day he's so mean he won't give you the right time. Next day he'll give you all he's got. He's queer.

CALICO. He's all right. Aren't you, Dave?

MIKE (*to Calico*) Show Johnny the birthday present Dave bought you. (*To Johnny*) That's the way he is.

(JOHNNY *rises and looks at Calico*)

He gave her a birthday present that took his whole week's wage.

DAVE. Why don't you shut up?

JOHNNY (*crossing to Calico*) What did he give you, Calico?

MIKE. Go on. Show him.

(CALICO *extends her left arm. JOHNNY pretends to examine the watch for the first time*)

It's good, isn't it?

JOHNNY. Yes. It's good.

CALICO. They're like real diamonds, aren't they?

JOHNNY. Yes. You'd say they were real.

(JOHNNY *catches DAVE's eye*)

MIKE. You can't tell real ones from fake, I say.

JOHNNY. I don't agree. (*He looks at Calico*) If you look hard enough you can usually pick out a fake. (*He moves up c*)

MIKE (*rising*) Let's have another drink. (*He opens some more bottles of beer*)

CALICO (*rising*) Now you're talking. (*She moves to the table, picks up one of the opened bottles and gives it to Johnny*) Let's drink to the Farrell boys. They're all together again.

MIKE (*refilling his glass*) That's it. The Farrell boys.

(JOHNNY *refills his glass*)

CALICO. The big one—the little one—and the—the smart one.

(*She collects a bottle of beer, moves to Dave and shares it with him*)

JOHNNY (*putting the bottle on the table*) The mediocre one.

(*They drink*)

MIKE (*enjoying himself; to Johnny*) Tomorrow we'll get you a job. You can work in the yard with me. (*He sits above the table*) It'll toughen you up. (*To Calico*) He's been living in the lap of luxury.

CALICO. Maybe he'd rather push a pen like Dave.

JOHNNY (*sitting L of the table*) If it's a very small pen.

MIKE (*to Dave*) Can you fix it for him to get an office job?

DAVE. He doesn't want one.

JOHNNY. I'll look around first.

CALICO (*crossing above the table to the sideboard*) The way Lord Nelson did. With one eye. (*She puts the bottle on the sideboard*)

MIKE. Dave's where the money is. He's cute.

JOHNNY (*thoughtfully*) Is that so? What do you do, Dave?

MIKE. He pays wages. He's there first.

JOHNNY. Yes. (*He suddenly smiles*) Why don't we break in and walk out with the wages? Everybody's wages. That way I'll get my thousand pounds.

MIKE (*laughing*) That's a good idea.

CALICO (*moving RC*) What thousand pounds?

JOHNNY. The thousand I owe, darling.

(CALICO *moves up C*)

I'm a man of substance, you know. I don't get along on pin money. I owe it all over the place.

(*They drink. DAVE is thoughtful*)

DAVE (*to Johnny; very seriously*) You wouldn't get away with it. You wouldn't have a chance.

JOHNNY (*surprised*) What are you talking about?

DAVE. You said break into Mallaby's. You couldn't.

(CALICO *moves down C*)

MIKE. He was kidding, you chump.

CALICO (*moving down R*) He thought you were serious.

(*They laugh at DAVE's discomfiture, then there is a silence*)

MIKE (*presently*) Do you suppose . . . ?

JOHNNY. What?

MIKE. Nothing.

DAVE. It's surprising nobody tried it. It could be done.

CALICO. How?

DAVE (*excitedly*) They collect the money from the bank on Thursday. Well, supposing . . .

JOHNNY. Supposing we drop the subject.

DAVE. I was only saying it's possible.

JOHNNY. It's dangerous talk.

MIKE. Yes. Shut up.

JOHNNY. It doesn't lead anywhere.

CALICO (*putting her glass on the sideboard*) Could be . . . (*She crosses to the easy chair LG*)

JOHNNY (*to Mike*) Do you think the old girl who runs this magnificent hotel could put me up, Mike? I've got to sleep somewhere.

(*CALICO sits on the right arm of the easy chair LG*)

CALICO. There's a place in the attic.

JOHNNY. It'll do.

MIKE. I'll go and ask her.

JOHNNY. I'll go with you. My bag's downstairs.

MIKE. How about another drink?

JOHNNY. Not me. I'm sleepy.

MIKE (*rising*) Come on.

(*JOHNNY rises*)

We'll go and see Mrs Finnegan.

(*MIKE and JOHNNY move to the door down R*)

CALICO. The Finnegans are sure to look after the Farrells.

JOHNNY. The nearest we've been to Ireland is singing *Phil the Fluter's Ball*. Good night.

CALICO. Good night, Johnny.

(*MIKE and JOHNNY exit down R. DAVE rises and stands facing the fireplace*)

(*She looks at her watch*) Johnny thinks the watch is good. Do you know, Dave, he valued it at nearly two hundred pounds.

DAVE (*strained*) That's silly. (*He turns, crosses above the table and stands down RC*)

CALICO (*rising and moving to L of Dave*) Yeah? Where d'you get all that money, Dave?

DAVE. It didn't cost . . . (*He takes her in his arms*) What if it did? You know I'm in love with you, Calico. You know that. If I'd the moon you could have that, too.

CALICO (*smiling and stroking his hair*) You're cute, Dave. That's really nice of you. (*She kisses him, then turns away*) But I wouldn't want you to get into trouble.

DAVE (*excitedly*) I don't care. So long as you . . . You do love me, don't you, Calico? I couldn't bear . . .

CALICO (*moving above the table*) There now. Take it easy. Of course I do.

DAVE. Then nothing else matters. Don't you see?

CALICO (*quietening him*) Yes. I understand. But Mike mustn't know, must he? (*She smiles vaguely, an indeterminate "Mona Lisa" smile*) Mike's nice, but . . .

DAVE. He's coarse, and crude, and rough. (*He moves to L of the table*) He isn't for you, Calico.

CALICO. Sure.

DAVE (*alarmed*) You're not falling for him?

CALICO. No. I'm all for you, Dave.

DAVE (*sighing*) I love you so much, Calico.

CALICO. Sure you do. (*Suddenly thoughtful*) Say—the other one—Johnny—he's okay, isn't he? He's cute.

CALICO *smiles as—*

the CURTAIN falls

SCENE 2

SCENE—*The same. An evening three weeks later.*

When the CURTAIN rises JOHNNY is seated above the table, reading a racing journal. He appears reasonably satisfied. After turning a few pages he calls out to DAVE, who is in the bedroom.

JOHNNY (*shouting*) What time does Cohen get to his office?

(*There is no reply*)

(*He glances round at the door up R and calls again*) Dave!

(*DAVE enters up R, in his shirt sleeves. He is nervous and strained*)

I thought you'd gone to bed. I've got a good thing here. What time can I contact Cohen?

DAVE. Still finding winners?

JOHNNY. I asked for information. Not sarcasm.

DAVE (*moving C*) Cohen's always there.

JOHNNY. He doesn't sleep there, does he?

DAVE. He doesn't sleep.

JOHNNY. I see.

DAVE. What have you got?

JOHNNY. "Red Timothy" for the first race. Looks good.

DAVE. They all look good.

JOHNNY (*carefully; surprised*) No, they don't. Usually they look bad. What's worrying you?

DAVE (*crossing to the fireplace*) You've been here three weeks and all you do is back horses.

JOHNNY. I don't back horses. I back winners.

DAVE (*moodily*) Some of the time.

JOHNNY. I'm not God. I don't read tomorrow's newspaper. Sometimes I'm wrong.

DAVE. Sometimes.

JOHNNY. I've paid my way, haven't I? It's better than pushing a pen for six-ten a week, like you do. What's getting into you? You criticize Mike, and you criticize me. (*He rises and moves down LC*) There must be something wrong with us—or something wonderful about you. Which is it?

(*DAVE starts, tightens his fist and advances earnestly a step or two towards Johnny*)

DAVE. I can answer that. Easily.

JOHNNY. Let's have it.

DAVE. It's us. We're no good, Johnny. Mike's a big ignorant fool. You bury your head in racing papers and dream big dreams. And me . . .

JOHNNY. Yes. What about you?

DAVE. You're giants at the side of me. (*He suggests height with a move of his hand. Quickly*) No, I don't mean this way. (*He moves up C*) I mean—Johnny, I'm . . .

JOHNNY. What the devil's wrong with you?

DAVE (*moving down C*) Johnny, I'm in a hell of a mess. I've got to tell somebody about it.

JOHNNY (*facing Dave*) Tell me.

DAVE. It's not easy.

JOHNNY (*shrugging*) Then don't tell me.

DAVE. Yes. I'll tell you. Johnny, it's . . . (*He breaks off*)

JOHNNY. It's about Calico, isn't it?

DAVE. You know about her . . .

JOHNNY. Not much. I know you bought her a present that cost you a whole week's wages.

DAVE. A week? If that was all.

JOHNNY. What *did* it cost?

DAVE. A fortune. It cost a fortune.

JOHNNY. A hundred and fifty?

DAVE. A hundred and sixty-five. That's what I wanted to tell you about, Johnny. Not just that, but . . .

JOHNNY. Where did you get the money?

DAVE. I—I . . .

JOHNNY. You're an accountant, aren't you?

DAVE. No. But I'm in the office.

JOHNNY. You handle the cash at Mallaby's?

DAVE. Yes.

JOHNNY. Is that where it came from?

DAVE. Yes. Not only that. More besides.

JOHNNY. How much?

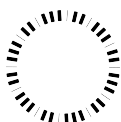
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