His Honor Abe Potash

Founders Staff

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"HIS HONOR - ABE POTASH"

A. H. WOODS
"HIS HONOR - ABE POTASH"

ACT II
ACT II.

The Mayor's office - Large swinging doors
R - two large windows in flat - door down
L - Square box set -

Props--
Platform up C - Desk on Platform - Large
High Back Arm Chair at desk - 8 ft. table
C - 4 high back chairs - Leather chair L-
Leather chair R - Book Case R - Bookcase L-
Hall tree up L - Water Bottle and Stand up
R - Large oil painting of Abraham Lincoln
on Flat C - Seal of State of New York on
flat above picture - Lots of legal papers-
Summons - Warrants - Tax receipts - Law
books - Gavel--

Electric

Large Chandlier - Wall brackets - Desk lamp -
Amber light back of windows - White strips at
doors R and L - White-Amber foots and concert
border full - telephone.
ACT TWO

The Mayor's Office.

About four months later.

Discovered a policeman, OFFICER CRAWFORD, cleaning with feather duster.

Enter ROTHWELL, R.

Crawford

(Back of Table - c) Good morning, Mr. Rothwell.

Rothwell

Good morning, Jerry. Where's the people's friend this morning? (Sits R. of table)

Crawford

His honor you mean. He's round at Police Headquarters to check up the mileage on the patrol wagon.

Rothwell

He's a pretty small potato, ain't he?

Crawford

Yes. He spends less of the city's money and more of his own than any mayor we ever had.

(Rothwell starts to pick up some scratch pads)

Here, put those scratch pads down. They've got serial numbers on them and he's memorized them all. If you want to make memorandums, here.

(He reaches into the waste paper basket)

Slit three sides of them and turn them inside out. (Enter EVANS)

Evans

What's the idea of the waste paper basket?
Evans
He told me to tell you that no matter what Potash wants of us to...do it...to take all he has to say.

Rothwell
That's all I've been hearing ever since this gink was elected and I'm sick of it...I'm tired of it...I'm beginning to believe that Stafford has lost his mind....

Evans
(Sits)
Doin't you think it, today's the day, Rothwell. This is what we've been waiting for. The big show comes off this morning when we meet here in the Board of Estimate.

Rothwell
You mean that Park Business passed last night by the Board of Aldermen. And do you think Potash has signed it?

Evans
He will sign it. He will do just as Stafford says.

Rothwell
What makes you think so?

Evans
Because Stafford has got this thing sewed up. He will try to win Potash over by good means but if he can't work it that way, then he will bring the pressure to bear that in the end it will be..."Sign on the dotted line, please" and after that....

(Crawford comes back)

(Rothwell and Evans rise and remove hats)

Crawford
(Knocking on desk court-officer style)
Gentlemen, the Mayor.
(Enter Potash L)

Potash
That ain't necessary, Mr. Officer. In the first place they aint gentlemen and in the second place if the City Comptroller and the President of the Council don't know I'm the Mayor, it's time they learned.

Evans
Now look here, Abe--

Potash
Abe? What ARE we...lodge brothers?
He means Mr. Potash.

Potash

Potash would be all right, but for what I've got to say to him, Mister Potash is better. Now then, Evans, you should be so good and give me your check drawn to the order of the city Chamberlain for twenty dollars.

Evans

What for?

Potash

Last night you took your wife and a party of friends for what the newspapers call after the smashup a little spin to Geissenheimer's Red Lion Inn and back. The distance is forty miles and a fraction. We won't bother about the fraction this time; if anyone uses the street department car for joy riding, the city ain't going to cut rates on private garage owners. So come across - twenty dollars.

Evans

Say, look-a-here, Potash, be reasonable. That street department car is laid up there without a soul using it, so what's the harm if I took my wife out for a little ride last night. I'm a city official, ain't I?

Potash

The mayor is also a city official, and do I take my wife out riding in the city cars? No sir, if my wife wants to go automobile riding, she drives herself in our Ford, Evans, and you should do the same.

Evans

I haven't got a Ford.

Potash

Well, buy one. It would be cheaper in the end if you are going to pay me twenty dollars every time you take an automobile ride.

(Rothenbolt)

He's got you.

Potash

Wait, don't laugh. For you, the sad part is now coming. I see on the Fire Department payroll that your son is drawing down eighty-three dollars and thirty-three cents a month as a veterinarian.
That's right.

(Rothwell)

Potash

And in looking up the records, I find that since we done away with horses two years ago the only animal in the department is a dog with black spots on it, which they call a damnation hound, and this Damnation hound ain't been sick since the time it bit a colored man three years ago. Now I ask you, Rothwell, should we go on paying to a veterinary a thousand dollars a year to look after a perfectly healthy Damnation hound on the chance that he is going to bite another colored man some time.

Rothwell

The Civil Service protects my son, as long as there is an animal in the fire department.

Potash

But the Civil Service don't protect ---- the animal. I'll shoot that damnation hound and that will abolish your son's office.

(Evans and Crawford laugh)

Rothwell

And what will I be doing all this time? Ain't there courts?

Evans

Let him rave. He stands about as much show of abolishing your son's office as he does of collecting that twenty.

Potash

You'll have to collect the twenty, not me.

Evans

And how are you going to prove that I rode forty miles?

Potash

By circumstantial evidence. Because my wife and I followed you to the Red Lion Inn and then robbers charged me for two glasses lemonade and a tongue sandwich three dollars and a quarter, which I would shenok you, Evans. Just give the city a check for twenty dollars and we would call it square. Only don't do it again. At my time of life, I couldn't go trailing joy riders with such a female Barney Oldfield for a chauffeur. Nu here she is now.

(Enter Mrs. P. R.)

Mrs. Potash

Listen, Popper, could I speak to you private for a moment?

Potash

Officer Crawford,
Crawford

Yes sir.

Potash

Show these gentlemen the elevator and take a look at it yourself. It's tied in the shaft so they couldn't get away with it.

Evans

Now look here, Potash.

Potash

(Comes down to back of table)

Good morning.

(Exit Evans, Rothwell and Crawford)

Well, Mommer, you certainly look great. If your Ford only loved up to your clothes it would turn itself into a Jimplex.

Mrs. Potash

Listen, Popper, what is this? (X L.)

(Sits L. of table)

Where did you get this?

Mrs. Potash

A policeman gave it to me this morning. Why, what is it?

Potash

What do you think it is - a diploma? What would it be? It's a summons. Here, it says the People of the State of New York to Fannie Potash, greeting, and it says you should appear in the Magistrates Court to answer a complaint of violating the highway car law in that you drove an automobile on Palisade Avenue at an excessive speed to wit twenty-nine miles an hour. What do you mean by it driving an automobile to wit twenty-nine miles an hour?

Mrs. Potash

Twenty-nine miles an hour? Well, that only goes to show what crooks them fellers are.

Potash

Them fellers are only doing their duty.

Mrs. Potash

What do you mean their duty? They said when I bought the car that when she got loosened up she would do easy thirty-five, and here I had her wide open, Popper, and the best she does is twenty-nine. The policeman is a witness, so you should positively write them people they misrepresented the car. Maybe they would give us a rebate or something.
Now listen, Mommer, what is going to be the end of this meshuggeneh idea of yours? Do you think I'm made of money?

What does it cost to run a Ford?

It ain't what you run what costs money. It's what you back into. Last week you backed into a Packard and the week before that you backed into a Pierce. Why must you go back into such high priced cars? Another thing. Last month you run over chickens for eight dollars and fifty cents. What are you - a schochet or a chauffeur?

Could I help it if once in a while I run into a chicken?

For eight dollars and fifty cents you could run over canvas back duck. And now you get arrested yet.

They wouldn't do nothing to me.

Why not?

Well, ain't I the wife of the mayor of this town?

What's that got to do with it? Them fellers would sooner arrest a member of my family than anybody else in the world except me. You know very well that when I went into office I took an oath to uphold the constitution of the United States.

Say, you and your Constitution. The constitution of the United States ain't got no more in it about speeding than it has about Fords.

Then explain that to the judge, not me. The summons says you should be in the Police Court this morning at eleven o'clock. It's already half past ten.

But Popper, I couldn't be there at eleven o'clock. I got an appointment at eleven o'clock to have them put some grease in the differential.
Potash

Don't pay no money to a garage for that. Use the soup you give me last night. It was too greasy for me. Maybe it would be just right for the differential.

Mrs. Potash

Please, Poppy, ring up the judge and tell him I wouldn't do it again.

Potash

I wouldn't positively do nothing of the kind.

Mrs. Potash

Popper, as a favor to me. You don't want your wife to stand in public before a whole court full of people and have to take language like that from a judge. Please, Popper.

(Weeping - Potash takes phone)

Potash

Hello, give me one four two city... a shame and a disgrace... not two months a mayor and my wife gets pinched yet... hello, hello, is this the Magistrates Court. This is Mayor Potash. I want to speak to the Judge... a fine position to put me in...

Hello, is this the Judge... Good morning, Judge... this is Mayor Potash. My wife got arrested for speeding, and I want to ask you as a favor to me to hear the case in your private office. She aint ashamed to break the law in public but she hates to answer the law in public... What?... Why I didn't know that... Tell me again... You mean to say that I could do that under the City Charter... But the witness aint here. What? Sure she pleads guilty. She don't have to plead guilty. I know she's guilty. Thank you Judge. Good-bye.

What did he say, Popper?

Potash

He said that as Mayor of this town I am it's chief magistrate and as chief magistrate I could try you myself, and I could let you off or do whatever I wanted to.

Mrs. Potash

Well, thank Heaven that's fixed up. Now I've got to go over to the garage, Popper, and I'll see you at lunch.

(She starts to go out, Mrs. R.)

Potash

Here. Wait a minute. I am going to hold Court. Rosie Potash you are charged with driving an automobile to wit twenty-nine miles an hour, and I wouldn't even ask you, if you are guilty or not guilty. Any woman who couldn't take a suggestion from a man she's been married to for twenty five years and tells him it
is none of his business when all he is trying to do is to let her know that she is running the car without oil, is guilty.

Mrs. Potash
There was plenty of oil.

Potash
There was plenty of oil for a salad but not for a car.

Mrs. Potash
What do you know about how much oil a car would have?

(Bangs with gavel)
Don't argue with the court!

Mrs. Potash
Will you stop this nonsense and let me get out of here?

Potash
I will let you get out of here with a fine of ten dollars and as this is a first offence I wouldn't be hard on you. I would take it out of your housekeeping money in installments or two dollars a week - and I hope this would be a lesson to you, Mommer. When you take me out riding again in your car, remember the feller who is watching the speedometer ain't your husband, he's your judge.

(Enter Irma R)

Irma
Good morning, father.

(L.)

Potash
Well, well, well. Nu, Irma, what brings you here.

Irma
Mr. Block asked me to meet him here.

Potash
What's the matter with meeting him over to the house some evening? Mommer ad me don't care how much electric light you burn in a good cause like that.

Irma
Oh, please father--

Potash
Alright.. alright, I wouldn't disturb you. I got an appointment across the street at the store and you could have the whole place to yourself.

(Enter Block)
Why, how do you do, Commissioner.

Block
(Left)
Good morning, Mayor. How's the mayor this morning?

Potash
He's just going across the street to be a clothing dealer for a few minutes. Mommie does her best over at the store but you can't run a clothing store and a Ford without neglecting one of them. Ain't that so Mommie?

(Mrs. Potash doesn't answer)
Come, Mommie, don't be mad at me. If the Supreme Court decided a case against the Steel Trust, I could decide against you.

Irma
What's the matter.

Mrs. Potash
The matter is that being a mayor has gone to his head. He's crazy.

Potash
That's gratitude for you. She goes to work and gets arrested for speeding and instead of having to go to a regular court, I find that as Mayor I can try her myself, so as a favor to her, & Irma, I heard the case and out of the goodness of my heart, I fined her ten dollars and this is the thanks I get.

Mrs. Potash
And do you suppose I am going to pay it?

Potash
You've got to pay it. I'll leave it to Mr. Block here. He is a lawyer even if he ain't got no customers. How about it, Mr. Block? Couldn't I try anybody the same as a police judge in this town?

Block
The City Charter says so.

Mrs. Potash
What do I care what the city charter says? He couldn't act this way toward his own family.

Potash
I figured all that out, mommie. As a clothing dealer I have got friends and relations and can act as I please but as a Mayor, I'm a widower, an orphan and I ain't got a friend in the world. When the good Lord told Abraham olav asholem to
sacrifice his only son, Isaac, did he say: you couldn't act that way to a member of your own family? He went ahead and did what he thought was his duty and so far nobody has knocked him for it either.

(Exit L)

Mrs. Potash

A married woman ain't got no business to have a Ford; she's got trouble enough with a husband.

(Exit Mrs. Potash R)

(There is a slight pause during which Block looks at her)

Irma

Well?

Block

I haven't seen you since before the election.

Irma

Was it to tell me this that you asked me to meet you here.

Block

Well no --- not exactly.

Irma

(R of table)
You said over the phone that you had something...of the greatest importance to tell me...

Block

(L of table)
I have...only now...seeing you again after all this time...

Irma

I think, Mr. Block, we may as well understand each other. My attitude has not changed in the least. If you took this office here under father to win any favor you've wasted your time.

(With slight change)
There are somethings one cannot forget --

(Turns R)

Block

(Looks at her)
Just so..

Irma

Really, Mr. Block.

Block

(As she turns away)
Don't...I wouldn't hurt your feelings at this moment for anything
on earth. Won't you try to forget...won't you try to think kindly of me even if it's just make-believe...while I say what I have to say?

Irma

I don't understand...

Block

I hesitated for a long time before calling you up. I did a lot of pretty tall thinking. Even now I don't know whether I have done right. In some ways I suppose I ought to have spoken first with your mother and father...

Irma

(With sudden change)

I hardly think I need to hear any more...

(She starts out)

Block

(Catching her and holding her by the hand)

Wait...

Irma

Please...

Block

I am not trying to make love to you, Irma. I wish to heaven I were! I'd even be willing to take anything you might say... and I'd give...I'd give all I hope to be...to have the right to hold you in my arms while I tell you what I have to...

(crosses to C. front of table)

Irma

(Startled for the first time)

Why what...what is it?

Block

You know your father appointed me Commissioner of Accounts.

Irma

Well?

Block

He did it so that he could find out if there was anything wrong with the city's books...

Irma

Well?

Block

Well, I began with the tax office. I went over the tax collections, I went over Harry's books...
Irma
Harry's ...my brother's...

Block
Yes.

Irma
Well...well...why do you stand there looking at me like that? Why don't you say something? Why don't you...

(With sudden change)
Tell me!

Block
Harry's accounts are...wrong---
(Irma sits R. of table)
--by about three thousand dollars ---
(She falters)

Irma
Oh it isn't true...it can't be...
(Rises)
---say that it isn't...

Stafford
(Gruffly to Gooding as they enter)
Come on in. Come on--
Oh, good morning, Miss Potash and Mr. Block.

(Block and Irma start)
Just a minute. I've been waiting for a chance to tell you how glad I am that we have you two with us. That you people from the Reform element can see at first hand that we're not as bad as you thought us.

Block
I have not changed my mind, Mr. Stafford.

Stafford
Oh, come -- be reasonable, Block - the campaign's over. Be fair now. You've been working here for some time - going over the city books. Now, honestly, have you discovered anything wrong - anything off color. On the level now. Have you discovered one thing on us?

Block
Not yet, Mr. Stafford. Now if you will excuse us.

(Block and Irma exit R)

Stafford
High brow stuff.

Gooding
You -- you don't think they found out anything!
Stafford
What could they find out? Have you got those notes?
Now look here, brace up. You look as though you were afraid
to ask for a renewal of those notes.
(Back of table)

Gooding
I ain't afraid.

Stafford
Then what's the matter with you? Say, have you been drinking
again?

Gooding
I aint touched a drop since day before yesterday.

Stafford
Well, see that you don't too. You're going to need a clear
head till we put this over. Now throw your shoulders back and
try to act like a man.

Gooding
I'll tell you the truth. I'm ashamed.

Potash
(Outside)
When he comes, send him right in.

Crawford
(Outside)
How will I know him?

Potash
(As he enters)
He looks like a business man and a gentleman. Nobody else
looks like that around here. You couldn't mistake him. Good
morning, Mr. Stafford.

Stafford
(Back of table)
Good morning, Potash.

Potash
(Sits L of table)
Nu, Gooding, you're right on the job. Them notes are only
due today.

Stafford
Gooding thought he would get us both together here and then we
could fix up the renewals. I suppose he has told you he can't
pay the notes?
Potash
He didn't have to tell me. I knew it by instinct.

Potash
But I'm going to pay them, Mr. Potash as soon as I get the money....

Potash
Sure I know but people who are going to pay as soon as they get the money -- get the grip, get the asthma, get the rheumatism, but they never get the money.

Stafford
Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Potash, we haven't much choice but to go on renewing those notes till he disposes of his property. Now he's paid all his back taxes and has the receipts with him. Show him those receipts, Gooding.

Potash
(Not looking at the receipts)
Frame them Gooding. Decorate the home with them and after Mr. Stafford and me pay those notes, it'll be something to remember us by.

(Starts to sign)
Ai, sometimes I wish I'd never learnt to write. Tell me a hard luck story, Gooding, and make this easier for me.

Potash
(Not looking at the receipts)
Frame them Gooding. Decorate the home with them and after Mr. Stafford and me pay those notes, it'll be something to remember us by.

(Starts to sign)
Ai, sometimes I wish I'd never learnt to write. Tell me a hard luck story, Gooding, and make this easier for me.

Gooding
I'll tell you a good luck story that'll make it easier for you. The City is going to buy that property for a Public Park.

Potash
Don't fool yourself, Gooding. I am the mayor of this city and if that property was going to be taken for a park, who would know it better than me?

Gooding
Just the same, Mr. Potash. It was decided to buy that property at last night's meeting of the common council.

Potash
Last night's meeting of the common council. There was no meeting of the common council last night.

Gooding
Yes there was, Mr. Potash....and....

Stafford
(Takes Gooding to door R)
You can go now Gooding. You've got the Mayor's endorsement to
your notes and you can count on mine.

Potash

Wait a minute. You said there was a meeting of the common council last night...

Gooding

There was and at that meeting...

Stafford

(With meaning to Gooding)
I'll explain it to Mr. Potash, Gooding. You can go alone now.

Gooding

But Mr. Stafford...

Stafford

(Angrily)
Get out.

(Exit Gooding R.)

Well, Potash, I've got to be getting over to the office now...

Potash

Just one moment, Mr. Stafford. What took place at this very special meeting of the City Council?

Stafford

We took up the matter of a new city park. We considered the relative advantages of Damascus Heights and the Watson property, and we decided on Damascus Heights.

Potash

And how much do you propose to pay for this plaque spot?

Stafford

Plague spot...

Potash

Excuse me... health resort.

Stafford

The price is six hundred thousand dollars.

Potash

Six hundred thousand dollars. And last night I was risking my life in that automobile trying to save the city twenty dollars. Tell me Mr. Stafford, who owns Damascus Heights?
Stafford
Why don't you know who owns it? Gooding here has about ten acres and the Damascus Realty Company owns the rest.

Potash
The Damascus Realty Company, that's you.

Stafford
Now listen to me, Potash.
(Sit R. of table)

Potash
Listen to me first.
(Back of Table)
For two months now I've been mayor of this town and nobody has asked me to do anything that even looked crooked. I was beginning to think that after all I was mistaken. I actually thought, Stafford, the people was lying about you. They said you was a shark, a moral leper, and I thought the leper had changed his spots.

Stafford
Be careful what you say.

Potash
I am careful. I am picking and choosing. I am trying to think. You would take six hundred thousand dollars from the people and give them in return a place where their babies could get malaria. You would commit grand larceny, burglary and murder in the first degree, and I should be careful of my words yet. Go and get out of here before the English language goes back on me and I kick you out.
(L. of table)

Stafford
(Rises)
You'll kick nobody out. In a few minutes there will be a meeting of the Board of Estimate in this room, that resolution will be passed on and an appropriation made to carry it out, and you are going to approve it.

Potash
Am I? Who says so?

Stafford
I say so.

Potash
And since when do I take my orders from you?

Stafford
Now look here, I made you mayor of this town. You'll admit that
Suppose you did?

Potash

Stafford

And when you accepted this office from my hands, you knew what was expected of you didn't you?

Potash

I sure did.

Stafford

Well, it's come to a show-down, Potash. Well then come across, do what's expected of you.

Potash

Why should I? Is there some terrible secret in my live that I'm trying to hide? Not at all. I'm a plain man, I've had only one wife, one home, one family. Some people might think I've had a very rotten time, but nobody has got anything on me.

Stafford

Not as yet.

Potash

No, nor never will have, Stafford. So go ahead and hold your meeting of the Board of Estimate. Pass your resolutions. Make your appropriations. Vote your bond issues, and when you're all finished I'll do what's expected of me--by the people who voted for me but not by you.

Stafford

You will hey, well don't be so damned sure of it. I've been up against your sort before and I know how to deal with them. You all talk big, but you've all got your price and you're going to come through right now.

(BRADY enters, Stafford addresses Brady)

Here you get out of here. This thing is private.

Potash

Who do you think you're talking to?

Stafford

I don't know and I don't care.

Potash

(Xes R.)

Well I do. This gentleman isn't a politician. He's a business man. This is Mr. Brady credit manager of Donau Brothers, New York. I've been doing business with them gentlemen for twenty years, and I want them to think that I associate only with gentlemen. So you'll have to excuse us, Stafford.
Stafford

Now look here, Potash, you're going to listen to me right now.

Potash

I am, am I. Officer Crawford.

(Yes L.)

Crawford

(From entrance)

Yes sir.

Potash

Show Mr. Stafford to the elevator.

Stafford

All right if you won't listen to me, there are people you will listen to and you will hear from them before the Board of Estimate meets. Now for the last time, Potash...

Potash

Good day Stafford.

(Stafford goes out R.)

Potash..that's an existence - six more months of this and I will be buttoning up my coat to keep myself from stealing my own watch and chain.

Brady

So that was Boss Stafford.

Potash

Yes. He comes around here twice a day to see if I'm still honest.

Brady

Potash how is it that you never told us about your running for office?

Potash

Why should I bother you about it? You people have got too much on your mind without worrying about my troubles.

Brady

Now, Potash...on the level...why did you go into this...why did you let yourself become mayor of a one-man town like this?

Potash

Well, I'll tell you. It was practically forced on me.

Brady

Forced on you?
There ain't many of my people in this town, Mr. Brady. A couple of hundred may be. I know them all. They are hard-working honest people. Perhaps one or two rich men among them, the rest poor like me and most of them also like me uneducated. So why should a roscher like this here Stafford come among us poor people, us uneducated people, to pick a candidate for mayor. Aren't there plenty of well-to-do college graduates in this town that would make good mayors? But no, Mr. Brady, Stafford and those crooks thought that if they picked one of our small community, he would stand for their swindles. He would be flattered and greedy and weak and dishonest. So he chose me for his honor and I took it. I've got to show these thieves that they are mistaken. I may be a little old, I may be a little dull, but God will give me strength and smartness to make my people respected in this town anyhow.

Brady
Thank you, Potash. Now I want to tell you something. This fellow Stafford was in to see us, last week...

Potash
Stafford in to see you...

Brady
Yes...

Potash
Why - what for?

Brady
He wanted to buy up your accounts payable to us.

Potash
What?

Brady
Of course we didn't sell them to him. We wouldn't think of such a thing. We've done business with you for years and we have faith in you. But a thing like that doesn't help your credit any, you understand that...

Potash
But Mr. Brady, you see...

Brady
Perfectly. This fellow Stafford has discovered just what sort of a man you are and he is now trying to get pressure on you. He's going to use every means fair or unfair. He'll attack you right here in your business. Now then, your business is in good shape?
Potash
Why sure...sure...it's fine...better than ever.

Brady
Then how about your other creditors?

Potash
I've only got one large creditor, the Bank. I've had an accommodation there for years, the President is a personal friend of mine. He wouldn't sell me out to a crook like Stafford.

Brady
Then if you are sure of us and sure of your bank you're alright.

Potash
Sure I'm sure of the bank.

Brady
Well, I've got time to catch the train for Elmira. Glad to have seen you, Potash. Glad to hear of the fight you're making. And remember we're back of you.

Potash
And the bank is back of me too.

Brady
Then all you've got to do is to sit tight and don't let them put anything over on you. Goodbye.

Potash
Good-bye - good-bye and thank you. I'll be alright with you back of me and the bank back of me.

Brady
Write and tell me how everything comes out.

(Potash goes out R.)

Potash
Everything will be alright with you back of me...and the bank back of me...and the bank back of me...and the bank...the...

(He is walking up and down worriedly. Suddenly as if with a sudden idea he stops)

I wonder...Do you suppose that...

(He goes to the phone and takes it up)

Hello...give me...450 Damascus...it wouldn't be...them people wouldn't act this way after twenty years...hello...is this the first National Bank...I want to speak to the President Mr. Willis...This is foolish of me. They always DID renew them,
they always WILL renew them..Oh, hello, Mr. Willis..This is Potash..yes Abe Potash..I want to know if I could come round and see you about my loan, the notes is due tomorrow ain't it? That's what I thought, so I'll come round and see you this afternoon..and...What? You ain't got them notes no longer...Well, who has got them? What Stafford? You sold them to Stafford..How could you do this thing? Mr. Willis? But listen Mr. Willis..Now Mr. Willis..How..No, there's no use talking to him...I don't care if he IS in the bank right now..I don't want to talk to him. There's no use, no use at all. Good-bye.

(Hangs up receiver and walks distractedly up and down)

(Enter Mrs. Potash)

Mrs. Potash

Listen, Popper, I -- what's the matter, Popper don't you feel good?

Potash

I feel all right.

Mrs. Potash

No you don't, and I know what it is. You are worrying about the car, but I've been thinking things over, and I've decided to give up the car.

Potash

What!

Mrs. Potash

Yes popper. I can see how things is. I know how you feel about that car. Of course I enjoyed running it and everything, but you can't hide that you want me to give up that car.

Potash

I ain't trying to hide anything from you. But if you can see it in my face, I ain't ashamed to say that I am relieved that you are going to give up that car. Because if you was running a car in the Sahara Desert, you would anyhow run over a camel.

Mrs. Potash

So I put the whole thing up to the agent, and he has agreed to give me exactly what I paid for the car.

Potash

What!

Mrs. Potash

Yes, Popper, you can't hide nothing from me.
Potash
And to think that only this morning I fined you for speeding.

Mrs. Potash
I've forgotten about that already. Now all you've got to do, is to sign these.

Potash
What are these?

Mrs. Potash
The contracts.

Potash
What contracts?

Mrs. Potash
Contracts for the new Packard.

Potash
What Packard?

Mrs. Potash
The Packard I ordered.

Potash
You ordered a Packard Car?

Mrs. Potash
Yes, Popper. Ain't that fine? We get full value for the Ford and apply it to the Packard.

Potash
And you said I couldn't hide nothing from you. What do you think I was hiding from you, the Singer building? A four hundred and fifty dollar car ain't good enough for you to run into people with. You must got to have a high priced car and kill 'em expensive.

Mrs. Potash
The fact is that you don't want me to drive a decent car. You are the mayor of this town and you are content to let your wife drive round in a cheap little car just because you ain't liberal enough to buy something better.

Potash
Come, mommer, what is the use of getting upset over a lot of foolishness. I've got worse worries than this believe me.

Mrs. Potash
That's what you always say when someone asks you to spend a little money. No wonder you are well fixed.
Potash

Me well fixed?

Mrs. Potash

If you ain't, you ought to be.

Potash

I ought to be lots of things, Mommer, I ought to be smart. I ought to be tricky. There are all sorts of ways for an uneducated man to make money if he's got a hard enough heart. But I was always too soft, Mommer, and the consequence is that at fifty nine years, Mommer, I'm broke.

What?

Mrs. Potash

Potash

Yes, Mommer, I'm busted and if Packards cost ten cents apiece F.O.B. on the next block, I couldn't pay the freight on a Saxon.

Mrs. Potash

Wouldn't the bank renew your notes?

Potash

The bank don't own them. Stafford has got hold of them. He is trying to buy me up body and soul. He thinks he owns me now.

Mrs. Potash

But I don't understand...

Potash

I know you don't, but I want you to understand. I want you to help me decide what I am going to do.

Mrs. Potash

Why, what is it?

Potash

The Board of Estimate is going to meet here in a few minutes. They are going to put up to me a resolution to buy for a City park Damascus Heights...

Mrs. Potash

But the city needs a park.

Potash

And if we bought the property the city would still need a park. No, Mommer, the question is purely and simply one of a crooked deal; I want you to think it over carefully. If I sign, you can have everything. You can run Packards
and back into Pierce Arrows and pay as many fines as you want to. But if I don't sign...we are just where we begun, mommer. You and me, back at the very beginning. We give up our business, our home, everything... and

(As Mrs. Potash bursts out crying)

So that's the way it is, is it? You want me to sign, what?

Mrs. Potash

Just when we was getting along so well. Just when we was beginning to amount to some thing, to be somebody. All my life we worked hard. You in the store me in the house and now when we can expect a little comfort, a little happiness, you want me to give it all up. After twenty-five years to start all over again, when we've slaved and saved to get where we are. I can't do such things no more. I ain't young no longer. I ain't got the strength. It ain't got the heart. I couldn't do it, Popper. It would pretty near kill me.

(Enter Crawford R.)

Crawford

Excuse me, your Honor. Are you ready for the meeting of the board of Estimate?

Potash

(With meaning)

Yes...I'm ready. Tell them to come in. Hush mommer, the people will think we are fighting again.

(He takes Mrs. Potash to chair up R. then goes behind his desk as Evans, Rothwell and Stafford enter R.)

Gentlemen, the meeting of the board of Estimate will please come to order.

Stafford

(L. of table)

One moment, please.

(Comes up confidentially to Potash) before we begin, I'd like to have a couple of words in private.

Potash

(At desk on Platform)

The meeting has been called to order, Mr. Stafford.

Stafford

(Urgingly)

But this is important, Potash...and...it's private.

Potash

Private affairs must wait, Mr. Stafford.
(Sings with gavel on desk)

The meeting will please come to order. Gentlemen we will proceed with the business of the meeting.

(R. of table)

Mr. mayor, I move that we dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and proceed at once to new business.

The motion is carried without being put even.

Mr. mayor...

Mr. Comptroller...

I should like to ask if the resolution adopted last night by the Board of Aldermen for the purchase of a new city park has been signed by the mayor.

It has not.

(Turns to Stafford)

Well Stafford what's the use of holding this meeting, if the resolution is not signed? The Board of Estimate cannot pass money for the purchase of that park until the mayor signs the transcript of that resolution.

It is true that the transcript has not yet been signed by the mayor, but I am sure he is going to sign, and sign it at once.

(With meaning)

I am sure that I can make him see reasons why he should sign it.

It isn't necessary. I know what you are going to say. I know the only things you can say, and I will say them for you. You are going to say: Potash you are going to say: This thing is a steal, you are going to say. This thing is a grab, a swindle, a highway robbery.
(As they start to talk)

But, you are going to say to me, if you will sign this resolution, Potash then I will get a couple of hundred thousand out of it as President of the Damascus Realty Company, the Vice-president will get his share. Evans as Secretary will get also a slice, and even you, Potash, as Mayor of the City will have a rake-off -

(As they start to talk)

But, you are going to say to me, if you don't sign it, Potash, you are going to say... Then we are all in bad, because I know as well as you, Stafford, you've bought up all my notes, all my debts, and if you want to do it, you can ruin me.

(With change of manner and expression)

Now Mr. Stafford - gentlemen - I appeal to you... Let's stop before we do this. We are both married men, all of us. Do we want our wives to be ashamed of us. How can we go home and face them after a thing like this? This is wrong, all wrong. Every one of us knows it's wrong. Don't use the power you've got. Don't force me to do this thing.

Stafford

There's the resolution, sign it.

Potash

But, Stafford.

Stafford

Sign it.

Potash

All right... If I must, I must...

(Takes up pen)

But don't think for a moment that you are making me do this thing. What is my property, my happiness, compared to the lives of the little babies next summer. They ask for a public park to play in. You give them a public sewer. You can take away my business, you can sell my house, you can ruin me, and still I wouldn't do it. I would give you the clothes off my back, the shoes from my feet, I would hand you over everything, rather than put my name to this paper. But I haven't got the right. This woman, my wife, her and me we lived together for twenty-five years. She worked and she saved. She raised a family... she had trouble... lots of it. And now when she is just beginning to have a little comfort, a little ease, how can I take it away from her. And so, Stafford, I sign this paper... not... for you... for her.

Mrs. Potash

Wait! Don't sign it, Popper.
Potash

(Delighted)

What!

Mrs. Potash

Do you think I would want you to sign this----?

Potash

And do you think I ever had the slightest attention of
signing this? All I wanted was for you to tell me not to,
and I knew you'd do it, mommer, I knew you'd do it.

Stafford

Now look here, Potash.

Potash

(Bangs with the gavel)

The meeting will please come to order, Mr. City Treasurer,
Stafford, Mr. Comptroller Rothwell, Mr. President of the
Council Evans, sneak-thieves bunco stealers, green goods men.
(The three men rise protesting - Potash bangs desk with
gavel and says "sit down")

You ain't got the nerve to go out on the streets and hold up
the citizens. You might get hurt. Instead you would sell the
tax payers a gold brick. You would pick their pockets. You
want to steal but you want to be safe. Well, let me tell you
now you ain't safe. You can ruin me. You can sell me up.
but by virtue of the power and authority conferred on me by the
Charter of this city, the mayor vetoes the resolution passed
by the Common Council last night. And I give you all notice
that if you try to pass this resolution over my veto, if you
try to put over any more dirty deals like this, so sure as there
is a law and justice in this country, I will commit you all to
jail myself and let the grand jury deal with you. I've got the
power and I will use it.

Stafford

Great, Fine! I'm glad you got it out of your system. It's
a good speech for a five and ten cent mayor even if you can't
get away with it.

Potash

It's a good speech for a garment dealer mayor and I will
get away with it.

(As Rothwell leaves the room)

Here where are you going? This meeting is not adjourned.

Stafford

He's going out on a little errand for me. Now look here,
You wouldn't speak to me alone before. And I'm going to
give you one more chance.
Potash
Excuse me, Stafford, you don't understand how things are going. From now on, Stafford, you ain't giving chances, you are taking chances.

Mrs. Potash
Don't argue with him, Popper. You are all excited now.

Potash
This ain't excitement, mommer. This is exercise. I am getting in training for the next crooked deal.

Stafford
Before you do something that you are going to be sorry for, Potash, listen to me.

Potash
I have listened to you for the last time - in private. Hereafter whatever you've got to say, you'll say in public.

Stafford
If you don't listen now, you'll never get another chance.

Potash
Don't do me no favors, Mr. Stafford. For my part you can go to a place where there is no long distance telephones or cold storage neither.

(Enter Rothwell, with Block, Irma and Harry)

Why, what's this?

Block
You sent for us, Mr. Mayor?

Potash
I sent for you!

Block
Why, yes, so this gentleman said.

Stafford
I sent for you.

(Turns to Potash)

Now, Mr. Mayor, You've been quite outspoken about this Board of Estimate. You've called us crooks, threatened us with jail and you thought we didn't have an earthly come back, didn't you? Well, I want you to consider the position of this young fellow there.

Potash
I have considered it. I suppose that he'll lose his job. Well, there's other jobs, and even if there weren't, this wouldn't be the first time he was out of a job. Why, Harry, what's the matter?
Harry

(Down R.)
I didn't do it father...I swear to you I didn't do it...
I don't care what anyone says...I didn't do it.

Potash

Do what?

Stafford

Rothwell, you know the facts. You tell him.

(Sits L.)

Rothwell

For over two months I have suspected something wrong in the tax office. There were a lot of erasures in the cash book and corresponding erasures in the record of daily bank deposits. They're his books and they're his erasures.

Harry

I tell you I didn't do it. I swear I didn't.

Potash

Suppose he did do it. He makes erasures in one book and he makes erasures in another book. The boy is a rotten book-keeper.

Rothwell

He's a good bookkeeper but he's a bad cashier.

Potash

Do you mean to say my boy has taken the city's money?

I mean just that.

Rothwell

Evans

Certainly.

Potash

Well, I don't believe a word of it. There's some crooked scheme here. Some game. And besides what does a politician, a gambler and a drinker like Rothwell know about auditing books?

Stafford

(Rises)
All right. You have your own commissioner of accounts and he's right here. Now, Mr. Block, you've been going over those books and I call on you to tell us exactly what you've found there.

(Sit)
Block
(R. takes Irma's hand)
I will report on the condition of those books at the proper time and place.

Stafford
In other words you don't dare.

I just refuse, that's all.

Stafford
There you have it Potash. If this boy were innocent, wouldn't Block tell you?

Potash
Mr. Block. This fellow has made an accusation... a serious accusation.

Block
This is not the time or place.

Potash
Maybe not, but there are reasons why I've got to know and know right now. Tell just what you found in those books of my son.

Block
But, Mr. Mayor, I'm not ready to report.

Potash
You must report. I've got to know.

Irma
(As Block hesitates)
I'll tell you. Harry's books show a

Stafford
A theft.

Irma
A shortage of three thousand dollars.

Mrs. Potash
Harry.

Potash
Suppose the books do show a shortage. Maybe the money's in the bank anyhow.

Rothwell
The city's bank balance is three thousand dollars short and I can prove it. It has all disappeared within three months.
Potash
Then the boy didn't take it. How would a young feller like that get rid of three thousand dollars in two months. He is home every night.

Stafford
He may be home every night but Rothwell here can tell you he's away from his office every day for two or three hours.

Rothwell
That's right.

Potash
but where...where does he go?

Stafford
Where? Why to his old friend Tobin and I can assure you it's no great trick to get rid of three thousand dollars at Tobin's in three months. Even if he is home every night.

Potash
Harry...

Harry
I told you, father, I didn't do it...I--

Potash
Is it so what he says that you have been going to Tobin's - Is it?

Harry
Yes but...

Potash
Now then I want the truth, Harry...no lying...no excuses...the truth... I'm telling you the truth.

Harry
And those books of yours three thousand dollars short? Are they ?

Potash
I--I--don't know, I ---

Potash
You do know. Now tell me...tell me.
Well then, they are...
(Sinks in chair R.)

Potash

Ai...wait...
(Sinks into a chair, Mrs. Potash xes to Harry)

(Rises)

Well Potash, that was a nice little speech you made just now. You called us all crooks and thieves, and you felt sorry for our wives and children for having us in the family, didn't you. Well, how does it feel when it comes home to you?

Mr. Stafford...I...

Stafford

Wait. Now look here, Potash. I'm sorry for you and I want you to know I'm sorry for you. If you had only let me speak to you when I wanted to, this need never have happened. Now we'll let bygones be bygones. And to show you that I'm sincere about this, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll just make up that three thousand dollars out of my own pocket. The city won't be out a cent and we can make the proper entries in the books. I'll give you my word that nobody will ever know anything about this. Now what do you say?

Potash

And you of course expect me to sign the resolution about the park.

Stafford

Well, if I do a good turn for you, naturally you will want to do a good turn for me.

Potash

All right. I understand.
(Calls)
Officer Crawford.

Crawford

Yes sir.

Mrs. Potash

Pepper, what are you going to do?
(Up to R.C.)

Potash

Officer Crawford, never mind the formalities. Bring that young man before me.
(Crawford takes Harry to C.)
Stafford

What is this, Potash?

Potash

This is the office of the Chief Magistrate of this city, under the city charter, I have the power to make it the chief magistrate's court for the city of Damascus. And I am now going to hear the case of the people of the State of New York against Harry Potash.

Stafford

Don't be a fool. Potash you can't get away with anything like this.

Potash

Can't I? I am a little new at holding court, so you will have to excuse me, gentlemen, if I don't do it right, I will ask this prisoner how he pleads: Guilty or not guilty.

Harry

I didn't do it, father, I swear I didn't.

Potash

He says: Not guilty.

Stafford

I don't care what he says or what you say. It's a case of either your son goes to jail or you sign that paper.

Potash

Don't you suppose I realize this: I am this boy's father. He is my son, but he has stolen the City's money. He is a thief—my only son a thief. But as the Chief Magistrate of this city, I commit the defendant to prison in $5,000 bail to await the action of the grand jury.

Curtain
"HIS HONOR ABE POTASH."

A Play in Three Acts.

by

Montague Glass and Jules Eckert Goodman.

1919 by Montague Glass and Jules Eckert Goodman.
CAST OF CHARACTERS

ABE POTASH
   A man of about fifty-five.

ROSIE POTASH
   His wife, a few years younger.

IRMA POTASH
   His daughter, about twenty-five.

HARRY POTASH
   His son, about twenty.

HENRY J. BLOCK
   A manufacturer, about sixty.

GEORGE J. BLOCK
   His son, about twenty-eight.

ROBERT STAFFORD
   Politician boss of Damascus, about fifty.

FRANK ROTHWELL
   City Comptroller, about fifty.

WILLIAM EVANS
   President of the Council, about fifty.

HENRY GOODING

CRAWFORD

FRANCIS BRADY
   About forty-five.

COUNTY DETECTIVE
   About thirty-five (a bit)
ACT ONE

HOME OF ABE POTASH

OCTOBER

ACT TWO

THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

FOLLOWING MARCH

ACT THREE

THE SAME

TWO HOURS LATER

TIME: THE PRESENT.

PLACE: DAMASCUS, N.Y.
ACT I

SCENE:

Living room in the Potash Home.
Two windows up and down R. - 10 ft. arch R.C. (Hallway backing with door R. window C.)
Fireplace C. Door down L. with stairs going up.

PROPS:

Colonial Furniture (Red upholstered)
Marble top table C. - 3 chairs -
Divan R.C. - telephone table - small chair - down R. Mantle C. - two arm chairs by fire place. Small table down L. Old fashioned arm chair down L. Writing desk between windows R. - book case up L. - lots of old fashioned bric-a-brac. Two crayon portraits (Mr. & Mrs. Potash in their younger days) over Mantle C. - other pictures
In hallway, Grandfather's clock - hat rack - small table.

ELECTRIC:

Amber . white full in foots and concert border - blue light back of two windows R. and window in hallway. Old fashioned chandelier. Wall brackets - white strip in stairway L. - table lamp on table L. - table lamp on table in hallway - piano lamp R. of mantle. Door bell off R. Telephone on small table R.
ACT I

Home of Abe Potash.
Hour about half past eight to nine.

Discovered Rosie and Irma Potash.
Rosie is playing solitaire and
Irma is rehearsing a meeting.

Irma

(Before rise of curtain)
Whereas, the Woman's Civic League of Damascus, has met to
consider the merits of the candidates for Mayor, and

(Ring curtain)
Whereas Mr. George J. Block by reason of his experience as
Chairman of the Citizens Union of Damascus has proved his
ability and - - Mommer, you're not listening.

Mrs. Potash
I am too. I hear every word you say. Ah-ha. At last I
turn up an see. Go on, Irma. You were saying that
George Block proved some thing, ain't it?

Irma

(R. of table C.)
I'm trying to put the resolution the way I'll have to tomorrow
night. Now please listen, won't you. Therefore be it resolved
that the Woman's Civic League of Damascus endorse the
candidacy of Mr. George J. Block in the coming municipal
campaign in view of his fitness for the office of Mayor of our
city. All those in favor please say aye!

(Turn to Mrs. P.)

Mrs. Potash
Again I'm stuck.

Irma

Mommer!

Mrs. Potash
What is it now?

Irma
You want to see your daughter be a success as president of
the Civic League, don't you?

Mrs. Potash
Sure I do. What did I send you to college for and wash all
the dishes myself?
Irma
Well then, when I say all those in favor please say "aya" you must remember you are the meeting. Now then, again, all those in favor please say "aya".

Mrs. Potash
I, but I ain't going tomorrow night anyway.

Why not?

Irma
At my time of life to go round to meetings and say I, What for?

(X.R. back of table)
But, Mommer, it's your duty to go to meetings.
(Sit R. of table)
Now that women have the right to vote, what would happen to this town if every woman thought as you do?

Mrs. Potash
Well, I could tell you, but I ain't going to because it would only mean another argument.

Irma
This is our big chance, Mommer. It's the first time women have voted in Damascus, and if we can't put a decent man in as Mayor, it will mean that there was no reason why women should vote.

Mrs. Potash
Did I say there was?

Irma
But you believe they should, don't you?

Mrs. Potash
Sure I do, but your popper has been voting for years already, and so far as I know he never went to a meeting and said I, so why should I? Besides, your papa is liable to come in here any moment and find us talking politics.

Irma
Men must get used to hearing women talk politics.

Mrs. Potash
They must but they don't.

Irma
Then we shall have to teach them and in this campaign. (Rise)
They are going to get their lesson right here in Damascus. The machine politicians of this town have plumbed the depths of rottenness and corruption.

Mrs. Potash
Well, what could I do? Am I a plumber?

Irma
No, but you are a voter. When the women go to the polls this fall to cast their first ballots the reign of the strictly party politician in this town is at an end... Listen to this, Mama, this is the way I am going to do it tomorrow night....Too long have the interests of the people been at the mercy of the machine politicians... too long has political corruption and political organized crime....

(Potash comes in)
held high revel in this town....Too long -

Potash
Hush... what is this? The Board of Aldermen or something? Half past eight and I bet the supper dishes ain't washed yet.

(Sit in chair)

Mrs. Potash
The supper dishes is washed long since. Go ahead, Irma. You was saying something about politicians riding in machines.

Potash
Let 'em ride. What do I care? Politicians is all loafers.

Irma
Then that's your fault.

Potash
My fault? I never hardly spoke to a politician in my life, and I don't want to either.

Irma
I know you don't, but you ought to. Politicians are loafers because respectable people won't talk to them. But that's going to be changed. We women are not only going to talk to politicians, we are going to be politicians.

Potash
You wouldn't positively be nothing of the kind. An idea! This is your fault, Mommer. Didn't I beg you shouldn't send her to college.

(Rise)
Mrs. Potash
You begged me. Why, it was you that suggested it in the first place, and I begged you that you shouldn't —

Potash
what's the difference who begged who? Young ladies goes to college to get refined ideas like wanting to teach, but to want to be a politician. You don't have to go to college for that. Such ideas comes from saloons not colleges.

(Sit in arm chair L.)

Irma
That has been the trouble in the past. Politics should be discussed not in the saloon, but the home.

Potash
Not in this home they wouldn't. Once and for all, Irma, let me tell you, that there wouldn't be no politics in this house. Ladies has got no right to be politicians.

Irma
They have the right to vote.

Potash
That I couldn't help. If you want to vote, vote, but leave politics alone.

Irma
But how could you vote without being interested in politics?

Potash
A question! I've been voting now for forty years and did I ever pay any attention to politics?

(Irma goes up C.)

Mrs. Potash.
Don't argue! Is it anything to be proud of that you voted and didn't know why?

Potash
Why should I know why? I voted always for Republicans. Then loafers was good enough for me.

Irma
(X.L. and kneels)
But don't you know that the Republican party in this town is practically run by Robert Stafford?

Potash
Well what of it? The Damascus Realty Company is also run by Robert Stafford. He's been president twenty years.

Irma
That's no reason why you should be a Republican. Don't you know that it was the Republicans in this town who put through the water steal? Don't you know that it was the Republicans who gave the streets to the trolley company and pocketed big bribes.
Potash
And don't you suppose that the Democrats would of done the same thing if they had the chance?

Irma
(Rise)
Yes. I do.

Potash
Well, I didn't give them the chance.

Mrs. Potash
He's right, Irma.

Potash
Certainly I'm right, and she thinks she understands politics. Politicians must got to take bribes, otherwise how could they make a living?

Irma
Oh, what's the use arguing with you.
(X. up R. to arch)
I'm going upstairs, Mommer. Please let me know when Mr. Block comes....

Potash
Mr. Block. You mean George Block son of the Block Car & Foundry Company?
(Rise)

Mrs. Potash
(Meaningly)
You know the father?

Potash
Know him? Who don't know him? It's an elegant family, Mommer. The Blocks were old established bankers on the other side when Washington discovered the Delaware.

Mrs. Potash
He's a fine young man, Popperl.

Irma
(Comes down to R. of table)
Yes, and he's in politics too.

Potash
You don't say so. Well, if you want to get into politics, that way, then I'm satisfied.

Irma
Nothing of the kind. My acquaintance with Mr. Block is
purely political.

Mrs. Potash

Yes! Well use the best plates, Irma. There's some corned beef in the ice-box.

Potash

Corned beef for Henry Block's son. Ain't you got no cold chicken or something?

Irma

Now listen, Popper. Mr. Block is coming here to talk over the meeting tomorrow night.

Potash

Well, would that spoil his appetite. Go on Mommer fix up a nice lunch for them....

Irma

Don't fix anything. Let me repeat that he is not calling here socially. This is serious, Popper.

Potash

I hope it is.

Irma

How long will it be before old fashioned people appreciate that there are other aims for young folks than falling in love and getting married? Is a good match everything and a good city nothing? Mr. Block and I have only one interest in common to make this a better town to live in. Aside from that we are hardly acquainted.

Potash

Well, everything has got to have a start. Five minutes before I first met your Mommer, I didn't know the color of her hair even, and the next day we was engaged.

(She abruptly turns and goes out of the room)

Now she gets mad. Did you ever see the like?

Mrs. Potash

(Rise -go up R. - then down R.)

Why shouldn't she? What you want to do - spoil everything?

Potash

Did I say something?

Mrs. Potash

Say something. Five minutes before he met me he didn't know the color of my hair and the next day we were engaged.
POTASH

Well, wasn't we?

Mrs. Potash

Sure we was and if I waited a couple days longer I wouldn't have had you, a schlemiel like you.

POTASH

(Pinching her cheek)

Ah you rascal, you, you was glad enough to get me; as for me I was in the seventh heaven...eighth even.

Mrs. Potash

That was because you was surprised that any woman would have you.

POTASH

Maybe, but you wasn't any woman, Memmer. You was one in a thousand. And what a figure you had in them days. I could put my arm twice round your waist, whereas now-a-days....

(The bell rings)

Mrs. Potash

Stegan. That must be young Block. Take away the arm and go open the door.

(Potash goes up R. Mrs. Potash X.L.)

POTASH

Ai, that's the way it goes. You jolly yourself that the honeymoon is still on, and the first thing you know you're a grandfather.

Mrs. Potash

Wait a moment. That ain't young Block that's Gooding.

POTASH

Gooding? You mean Henry Gooding?

Mrs. Potash

He telephoned he was coming over.

POTASH

Well, tell him I ain't home. I don't want to see that old schnorrer.

Mrs. Potash

But Popper, he come all the way over from West Damascus and I said -

POTASH

I don't make no difference what you said. You should of told him I was out of town. That feller's had nothing but
schlemazel for years and you want me to see him yet.

Mrs. Potash
Ain't you ashamed to talk that way about an old acquaintance.
(Bell rings again)
I'm going to let him in.

Potash
Let him in? Kick him out. I am telling you I wouldn't see him, Sommer. Don't you ---

Mrs. Potash
Ssshhhh!
(She goes out and comes in again with Henry Gooding after the following speech)

Potash
(X.L.)
All right. He wouldn't get no sympathy from me, because I ---

Mrs. Potash
Come right in Mr. Gooding, Popper, here's Henry Gooding.

Gooding
You don't remember me, Mr. Potash. Henry Gooding? Used to run the feed store in West Damascus. The automobile killed the feed business.

Mrs. Potash
I thought you started a roadside gasoline station.

Gooding
I did, but the darned stuff evaporated on me.

Potash
You look like the kind of feller that an iron foundry would evaporate on.

(L. of table)
Ain't it remarkable what an open winter it's been this year.

(Potash)
(R. of table)
It is, but if you come all the way from West Damascus to tell me that, the news already leaked out before you got here, so go ahead. Let us know what's on your mind, Gooding.
Gooding

Well, Mr. Potash it's like this. When you came to Damascus back in the early eighties... I bought my first piece of real estate. You were clerking for Jake Baum at the time.

Potash

You are mistaken Gooding. When I first came to Damascus I was peddling rubber stamps, and it wasn't long before every man and woman and child was fixed for life with a rubber stamp, so I took a job with old man Baum.

Gooding

He was a fine old character.

Potash

He sure was. He used to say to me, "Abe" he said to me, "the schnapps habit is a habit and the gambling habit also, but of all the habits which is a regular habit like the opium habit, don't never get the real estate habit."

Gooding

He wasn't much out of the way at that. I've owned a lot of real estate in my time.

Potash

I know you have. I suppose that one time or another, Gooding, you probably had pretty near the whole town foreclosed on you.

Gooding

It's all gone, Mr. Potash. All except ten and two fifths acres up in Damascus Heights.

Potash

Damascus Heights - that swamp there next to the Cemetery. Where does the Heights come in?

Gooding

It's got a big future, Mr. Potash

Potash

You a future! What good is that land. It's too wet for farming and too dry for swimming. You might take mud baths there for rheumatism if you wasn't afraid of blood poisoning.

Mrs. Potash

Is that a nice way to talk about the only piece of real estate Mr. Gooding owns?
Potash
Say, listen, Momma I can jolly a man about his wife's looks and his children's smartness, but when it comes to the vacant lots he owns, I speak my mind, otherwise the first thing you know, he would try to unload them on you.

Gooding
I wouldn't sell them lots for a thousand dollars apiece.

Mrs. Potash
There you see, Popper. What elegant lots they are.

Gooding
They're mortgaged for fifty thousand, and my wife says to me this evening, "Why don't you go round to see Mr. Potash, he wouldn't have the heart to refuse you."

Potash
She said that, did she? That's very nice of her.

Mrs. Potash
But Popper, you don't know what you wouldn't have the heart to refuse.

Potash
I know I don't, but I'm going to learn right now. I'm bracing myself for it, go ahead, Gooding.

Gooding
Well, you see it's like this: The mortgagee of them lots wants me to pay up three thousand dollars back interest and the unpaid taxes by next week otherwise they would start foreclosure proceedings.

Potash
A-ha, now it comes out.

Gooding
You see I've been up against it ever since I lost my health.

Potash
Did you lose your health from sickness or from whiskey?

Gooding
I ain't touched a drop since I don't know when.

Potash
I know when, July 1st. You couldn't claim credit for the whole country going dry.

Gooding
(Rise)
All right, all right, I've had misfortunes in the past. I
guess! I could stand it again, I ain't got a long time
to live anyway and

Potash
You sit right down in that chair and don't talk to me
like that. Now what is it you want from me?

Gooding
If I could get you to endorse my notes payable in six-
months, the bank stands willing to lend me three thousand
dollars. Now in six months time, Mr. Potash, the city
will have taken over Damascus Heights for a public park.

Potash
Who told you that?

Gooding
Bob Stafford, and he is willing to endorse my
notes for the balance of the money and I'll be able to pay off that
bank interest and taxes and clean up. For Good's sake
Mr. Potash, don't turn me down. This looks like my last
chance and - well, I guess my wife is right. If I lost
out now, it'll kill me, yes and her too.

Potash
Mommie get from the desk there the pen and ink.

Mrs. Potash
But Popper you ain't going to do anything so foolish as
to

Potash
Say what are you, the credit man around here? Do what I
tell you.

Mrs. Potash
But you yourself just now said...

Potash
Never mind what I said. Should I have this schlemiel's
life on my conscience... I suppose you brought the notes
with you?

Gooding
Yes. Here they are.

Potash
(Starts to read notes and looks at Gooding)
I don't understand how a man like you could get so broke.
You had a daughter married to quite a well-to-do feller
in Binghamton. Couldn't she help you out?
Gooding
She's got all to do to take care of herself and the children. He died three years ago without a cent of insurance.

Potash
You don't say so... Ain't you got no better pen than this, Hommer?

Mrs. Potash
But, Popper, how could you afford to endorse them notes? Suppose the city don't take the property for a park?

Potash
Didn't Bob Stafford say the City would do it? Bob Stafford runs the city don't he?

Gooding
And here is the notes he endorsed. Here's his signature on the backs.

Potash
Now are you satisfied, Hommer. Tell me, what does your daughter do for a living?

Gooding
She works in a dry-goods store.

Potash
And who takes care of the children?

Gooding
She's got them in an orphan's home.

Potash
An orphan's home. Here give me them notes.

Mrs. Potash
But, Popper, I ask you think this thing over.

Potash
Think nothing over. You should thank God that your children ain't in an orphan's home.

Mrs. Potash
And it ain't your fault that they ain't. Honestly, I think you must be crazy. Endorses notes for three thousand dollars like it would be nothing. What are you a millionaire or something?
Potash
Do you ask me that when you want new clothes?

Mrs. Potash

But you told me...

Potash

Never mind what I told you! Well, what are you standing?
Take the notes and go.

Gooding

All right, all right, but I want to tell you, Mr. Potash
that it says in the Bible if you cast your bread on the
waters, you will-

Potash

Say looky here, are you going or ain't you going?

Gooding

God will bless you for this, Mr. Potash. He knows that

Potash

One more word out of you, and I will throw you right out
of here. Go on, get out.

(He pushes Gooding out)

Chutzpah! Some people you do a small favor and right away
they try to get religious to you. Come, Mommer, don't get
sore at me. After all, what is the difference if I endorse
a few thousand dollars notes more or less. Let the bank worry
not you. If they are willing to loan him the money, that's
their lookout. They already got several thousand dollars notes
of mine. My notes is old friends with them people.

Mrs. Potash

And every three months, you make me listen to a long sermon
about supposing God forbid the bank shouldn't renew them
notes for you.

Potash

They always have and they always will. So forget your troubles,
Mommer, and see about fixing a little something for Mr. Block
when he comes. Send round Harry to the delicatessen store and

Mrs. Potash

Harry ain't home.

Potash

Again he ain't home...

Mrs. Potash

He's entitled to go out once in awhile ain't he?
Potash
What do you mean once in awhile? The boy is out every night and what's more he don't take it so particular to come home the same day either.

Mrs. Potash
Now that ain't true Popper. He never stayed out all night in his life.

Potash
He might just as well. The day before yesterday he come home at three o'clock. Maybe you think I don't know these things - and you lie awake there worrying over him.

Mrs. Potash
What do you care? You sleep through it all.

Potash
That's what you think, Mommer, but if you lay awake quiet so as not to disturb me I lay awake quite not to disturb you. Something's got to be done about it, Mommer. He's getting into bad company.

(Enter Harry and Stafford. Harry X.L. - Stafford up C.)
So, for once you get home at a decent hour, or maybe you forgot something so before you go out again, I would like to say to you a few words something. In the first place, Harry, I ----

Mrs. Potash
Abe! Don't you see that there's a gentleman here?

Stafford
Good evening, Mrs. Potash. Good evening, Potash. Sit down there Harry. I want your folks to hear what I've got to say, while you're here.

(Harry sits L.)

Potash
Well, Mommer, what did I tell you. Must you be a loafer and break people's windows?

Stafford
He hasn't been breaking windows that I know of.

Potash
Then what do you want to annoy this gentleman for.

Stafford
He hasn't annoyed me, Potash.
Mrs. Potash  
But what has he done, Mr. Stafford?

Stafford  
Nothing to be alarmed about.

Harry  
I haven't done anything.

Stafford  
Oh yes you have, Harry. You've managed to get yourself arrested.

Mrs. Potash  
Arrested?

Potash  
Arrested. Ai gowalt! Arrested and he ain't nineteen yet. Tell me, Harry, why did you do this thing? I am doch your father. Why didn't you let me know. At your age to get arrested for a thing like this!

Mrs. Potash  
But what did he get arrested for?

Potash  
What's the difference what he got arrested for? He got arrested didn't he? Always wants to give me an argument. (Rocks to and fro in his grief)

Stafford  
It's all right, Potash. He's promised me he won't go to a place like that again.

Potash  
(Again getting angry) A-ha, so he went to a place like that did he? Loafer what do you mean by going to a place like this? Do you hear, Mommer, at nineteen he goes to a place like that!

Mrs. Potash  
But what kind of a place did he go to?

Potash  
(Again rocking to and fro) Ai tmuris! Did I ever think that a boy of mine would go to a place like that!

Stafford  
As a matter of fact, I don't think he knew what kind of a place it was. You see, Tobin was running a poker game in the back of his pool room, and the police took everybody on the premises.
Well, could I help that?

Harry

But what was you doing in such a place?

Potash

I was playing Kelly pool.

Harry

And what business had you to be playing Kelly pool? Ain't there respectable boys of your own people to play with, Must you got to hang around pool rooms with this here Kelly?

Potash

Aw, you don't understand.

Harry

I understand enough. You're just as bad as this feller Kelly.

Potash

Mrs. Potash

Popper!

Stafford

Now just one moment. I believe the boy's story, Potash. He was only playing pool.

Stafford

Well was that so terrible?

Harry

It's all right to play pool if you play it in the right place, but Harry has been going to Tobin's place night after night, and the police say they warned him there was a tough gang there. That's why they arrested him.

Stafford

Mrs. Potash

But he wouldn't have to go to jail, would he?

Stafford

It's all right, I went round to the police station as soon as I heard of it. I have sons of my own and I know how I would feel if this happened to one of them. Harry's name wasn't even entered on the blotter, but I felt that you ought to know about this, so I brought him home myself.

Mrs. Potash

Thank you, Mr. Stafford. If it wouldn't be for you, our boy might be in jail.
Harry
They couldn't do anything to me. I didn't know they were gambling there.

Potash
You ought to know. You ain't a child no longer. You are nineteen. Tell me, Harry, what is going to become of you? Here, every night, week in week out, running around the streets till practically daylight. You are ruining your health, Harry. You are ruining your prospects. You got a good home, and I let you hang around the store, but I wouldn't live forever, Harry. Some day you must got to look out for yourself. And who is going to help you out then. Your friend Kelly!

(Mrs. P. has X.L. back of table during the speech)

Harry
Look here, Pop, can't you tell me this when we're alone?

(Rise)

Potash
You don't suppose I like to talk to you this way, do you? That I've got a loafer for a son is my misfortune. Believe me! I don't enjoy reminding myself of it.

Mrs. Potash
Well, don't then. What do you suppose Mr. Stafford thinks to hear you talking like this. Your own son a boy of nineteen you call a loafer? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are expecting too much for him at his age. He's only a child.

Harry
Oh cut it out Ma. You'd think I didn't know anything the way you talk. Give me credit for having some sense.

Potash
You ain't got no sense and you ain't got no manners either.

Popper please.

Potash
Your mother stands up for you and then you talk to her this way.

Harry
What did I say to her?

Potash
Hold your mouth.

Harry
Well, did I say anything to her?
Potash
Will you keep quiet.

Mrs. Potash
Harry, Harry, come go to bed.

Harry
No, I'll not go to bed. From now on I am going to do as I please.

Mrs. Potash
Come Harry -- come Harry.

Harry
You let me alone...damn it...let me alone.

Potash
(Suddenly slaps Harry in the face - long pause - then sits L. of table)

Stafford
Mrs. Potash will you leave us alone for a few moments. I want to speak with your husband.

Mrs. Potash
You got to excuse my husband, that he ain't got no better control over his temper than this, Mr. Stafford....Come Harry.

(She and Harry go out through arch to L.)

Stafford
(X.L. back of table)
(To Potash who has sunk in a chair and sits bowed over)
Now look here, Potash. Suppose the boy did get arrested. It'll be a good lesson to him.

Potash
I know it.

Stafford
Then why take it so seriously?

Potash
I never hit him before in my life.

What?

Stafford
That's the first time I ever raised my hand to that boy, Mr. Stafford.
Stafford
Well, that's more than any of my boys can say, and they're good boys too.

Potash
So is Harry a good boy. He's a little wild because we've spoiled him. He can twist his mother round his little finger and he practically does what he likes down in my store.

Stafford
Then why not let him work for strangers. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give him a job in the tax office where I can keep my eye on him.

Potash
Would you do that, Mr. Stafford?

Stafford
Why, I'll be delighted to do it.

Potash
Thank you, Mr. Stafford, you don't know how much I appreciate this.

(Rise)

Stafford
Don't say another word about it, and don't worry over that little love tap you gave him. You can't use moral suasion in a town like this. Too many temptations for boys, Potash. They will go out you know.

Potash
I know they will, but who would think that Tobin's pool room could compete with a good home like this. Tell me, Mr. Stafford you've got a whole lot of influence in this city. You are President of the biggest Realty Company and people call you the Republican boss. Why are such - why do you allow such places as Tobin's to exist at all?

Stafford
That's not up to me....that's up to the Mayor.

Potash
Then fire the Mayor! You're the boss.

Stafford
I'm chairman of the Republican City Committee. All I can do is to pick the candidates, I can hire 'em, Potash, but I can't fire them.
Potash

Well, pick, 'em right next time, Mr. Stafford. Of course I don't know nothing about politics but it don't take so much gumption as all that to be Mayor. Even a schlemiel like me, I could be a better Mayor than this rotten Mayor. (X.R.)

Stafford

I think the poor dub is doing his best at that. (Sit in arm chair L.)

Potash

Yes, he is doing his best! Why, if I would be Mayor, I would of had that feller closed before he opened. If I would be Mayor I would send every morning for the chief of police and I would say to him: Chief of Police, I would say, don't give me no arguments, I would say, because all policemen is loafers. I would say, and you are the head loafer. Now it's up to you. This has got to be a clean town. No gambling houses, no monkey business, nothing. I am the Mayor...the boss...you understand...Now get the hell out of here, and don't let me speak to you again.

Stafford

And how about the Board of Aldermen. They pass on the licenses to fellows like Tobin.

Potash

(X.L.) They do, hey? Wait, I'd fix them low-lives. I would call them fellers into my office, and I would say to them: Murderers, what do you mean by it? Ain't you got no hearts? Ain't you got no sense? You would give licenses to gambling houses which wins from the little babies the wages of their poppers? Must you earn a living as aldermen? Couldn't you forge checks? Couldn't you blow up safes?

Stafford

That's one way of dealing with them. Now how about the Department of Taxes and Assessments. There are people in this town who have not paid their taxes for years.

Potash

Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Stafford. (Sit L. of table) The chances is that them poor people, heebich, has been playing in hard luck, so here is where I would take charge myself. Listen, I don't want to press you, I would say, to them people, but you couldn't run a city on wind, y'understand. Now just name a day when you can pay them taxes. Take your time. Don't be in a hurry. And then if
they didn't pay on the day they named, that would be something else again.

Stafford

But you would have a Collector of Taxes.

Potash

I never put accounts into the hands of a collector till I have to.

(Rise)

My motto is that you could catch more flies with molasses than with fly paper, Mr. Stafford - now what else.

Stafford

(Rise)

Well, there's only one other thing I want to ask you. How soon are you prepared to accept the nomination?

Potash

What nomination?

Stafford

For Mayor.

Potash

What, me, Mayor?

Stafford

I think you'd make a very good Mayor.

Potash

Don't talk foolish, Mr. Stafford.

Stafford

I was never more serious in my life.

Potash

Why what do I know about Mayoring. All I know is the retail garment business and if a Mayor would know about Mayoring what I don't know about the retail dry goods business he would be a first class A number one Mayor.

Stafford

(LIC.)

Well, there you have it. I'm supposed to be the boss of this town because I choose the city officials but as a matter of fact I don't choose them, I have no choice about it. I have to take what I can find, and I'm obliged to look for them among the tough politicians. Every decent citizen complains about the way this town is run, and no decent citizen will help to run it. The next Mayor has got to be a business man, and you are that businessman.
Potash
(R.C.)

But Mr. Stafford I couldn't be no Mayor. I ain't got the first recommendation for a Mayor.

Stafford
You've got the very best qualification. You're an honest man.

So is any damn fool.

Stafford
Now look here, Potash. You've been doing business in this town for twenty five years and you're going to stay in business. There isn't a man, woman or child that I don't know from the President of the First National Bank to the fellow that sweeps the streets. There isn't one of them that I haven't done favors for and have influence with. Now isn't it worth your while to do me a favor and get the benefit of that influence?

Potash

But Mr. Stafford ---

Stafford
I have a special reason for asking this. Will you do it as a favor to me?

(Mrs. Potash enters. Stafford X.R.)

Mrs. Potash, how would you like to be the wife of the Mayor of this town?

Mrs. Potash
Say, how would I like to be the wife of the President of the United States. At my time of life it's too late to be divorced and married again.

(X.L.)

Potash
Is that so? Well, what would you say if I told you that Mr. Stafford had just offered to make me Mayor?

Mrs. Potash
What do you mean - what would I say? What are you trying to do? Start something? You know very well what I'd say.

Stafford
Well, what would you say? Mrs. Potash

(Mrs. Potash sits L. of table)
Potash
Let me say it for her. She'd say if you wanted me to run for Mayor that you must be awful hard up for Mayors.

Mrs. Potash
(Rise)
Hard up? He'd be practically out of them.

(Enter Irma)
Irma, what do you think. Your Popper wants to run for Mayor.

Irma
For Mayor? Popper?

Mrs. Potash
Ain't that foolish?

Irma
Foolish? It's utterly absurd. Why on earth should he want to run for Mayor?

Potash
Who says I wanted to run for Mayor? I don't want to run,
Mr. Stafford wants me to run.

Irma
But Mr. Stafford, you can't possibly mean this?

Stafford
Why not?

Irma
He hasn't the first qualifications for such an office.

Stafford
He's a business man isn't he? I thought your Civic League was anxious to have a business man for Mayor.

Irma
We are, but - there are various types of business men.

Stafford
(R.)
And your father belongs to the better type, the honest business man.

Irma
(R.C.)
But honesty isn't everything, Mr. Stafford. Honest men make blunders too. You see, you don't know father, that is not intimately, and we do, don't we Mommer.

Mrs. Potash
(C.)
Like a book.
Irma

The whole thing sounds perfectly absurd.

Potash

(L.)
Now look-a-here, I heard enough of this perfectly absurd stuff. Maybe it sounds crazy to you that I should be Mayor, but at the same time, I heard tell of Mayors that they got in New York and Chicago, which ain't such world-beaters neither.

Mrs. Potash
But what does a home body like you know from politics?

(X.L.)

Potash

If I don't know, then I should ought to know. It is time now that politics was talked in the home, not the saloon. The trouble with people is that they don't know enough about politics. They vote, and they don't know why they vote. When I vote, I want to vote right.

Mrs. Potash

All right, vote right if you want to. Only don't get mixed up with politics.

Potash

Ach, Mommer, you don't understand politics.

Mrs. Potash

And I don't want to understand politics. Politicians is all loafers.

(Sits L. of table)

Potash

That's what people used to think, but now that women has got the vote, it is going to be all changed. Us men and you women is going to stand side by side and we are going to show the old time politicians that nowadays the people would assert their rights and that - go ahead! Irma. You tell Mr. Stafford the rest of that schnoodles. You're the speech-maker around here...not me...

Stafford

And she would be very useful to you in your campaign, Potash. We all know Miss Potash and we recognize her influence. We realize that in order to get the women's vote this year we have got to put up candidates that women will endorse; I think we have that candidate in your father, Miss Potash, and his election is assured.

Irma

I don't think it is.
But you are the President of the League.

I am.

Then can't you swing it for him?

I can -- but I won't -- my father is a dear good man. As a daughter, I admire and respect him, as President of the Civic League I shall oppose him.

Did you hear this, Mommer? And for this we sent her to college.

You can't possibly mean this about your own father.

I'm sorry, but that is the way I feel about it. If he runs for Mayor I will oppose him.

You wouldn't positively do nothing of the kind.

An idea! How dare you talk this way to your Popper. Ain't you ashamed of yourself?

But, Mommer dear, these women trust me.

And ain't I got a right to trust you. What do you think of that, Mommer. For the first time in my life I get invited to run for Mayor, and she would oppose me yet.

It's all right Popper. Run for Mayor if you want to. Don't mind what she says. She is only the President of the Civic League, but I am the President's Mommer and what I say goes.

Now just let me say a few words, Potash, your daughter is a fine young woman and I cannot tell you how much I admire her, but if she thinks that the women are going to run the affairs of this town, she is mistaken. I am head of the Republican organization and when I nominate a candidate for office he always has been elected and he always will be, women or no women. Now take your time, Potash. Think this thing over,
and ring me up tomorrow morning at my house. If you want the nomination you can have it, and if you do have it, you'll be elected sure. Good evening Madame President, good evening Mrs. Potash. Think it over Potash. (Stafford goes out)

(Irma sits R. of fireplace)

Mrs. Potash

(Rise and X.R.)

Now you see what you done with your nonsense. He goes away mad, and when we ring him up tomorrow morning he says he changed his mind and we couldn't have it.

Potash

What do you mean we? Am I running for Mayor in my wife's name?

Mrs. Potash

All my life I worked hard, and if I did give once in a while a card party or something, who comes? A few old fashioned people the same like you, Popper, and now for the first time I got a chance to do something to be somebody, my own daughter stands in the way.

Potash

Wait a minute, wait a minute. Suppose I did become Mayor, what difference does that make to you?

Mrs. Potash

A lot of difference. We would move out of this house. We would go over to Palisade Avenue and take a bigger house. I would have a couple of servants, a little automobile maybe and then if I wanted to entertain--

Potash

Koosh, Mommie. You don't want me to become Mayor. You want me to become Charles M. Schwab. A mayor is a Mayor. He ain't a Standard oiler exactly.

Mrs. Potash

But everybody has got an automobile nowadays.

Potash

Everybody, except me, and if I would suddenly break out with an automobile, the first thing people would say is that for years I took a street car and just as soon as I became Mayor I could afford an automobile and where did I get the money.

Mrs. Potash

But you can afford one now, Popper.
Potash
That don't make no difference. A Mayor should ought to set an example. Mommer, people should look up to a Mayor. I don't want bank clerks to say well if the Mayor could do it why couldn't the paying teller. A Mayor must live like he was going to be investigated at any moment; and when the committee sends their accountants I would say to them: Walk right in, I got nothing to hide, there is the books.

Irma
(Coming down C.)
Then you are going to run for Mayor?

Potash
Not if they threw in the City Hall.

What?

Mrs. Potash

Potash
I wouldn't run for Mayor not if Mayors got five hundred a week to start.

Mrs. Potash
Why not?

Potash
Because in the first place I don't want to.. And in the second place I ain't got the brains to wear a silk hat every day. And besides, Mommer, there is people in this town which remembers me when I used to go round with a push cart peddling stationery and rubber stamps. Is them people going to vote for an ex-rubber-stamp peddler to be a Mayor?

Mrs. Potash
(X.L.)
Suppose you was once a rubber stamp peddler? Must you now be only a rubber stamp? Over and over again...doing the same old thing...making the same old mark. Ain't you got no ambition?

Potash
I got an ambition to go to bed, Mommer.
(Mrs. P. sits L. of table)
Even talking about being Mayor keeps a man up too late. Come, Mommer, it's pretty near nine o'clock.
(Mrs. Potash sobs)
There, there, Mommer. Don't take on so. You have lived all these years without being married to a Mayor, and you can go a little longer. How long will I live? Who knows, and maybe your second husband will anyhow be a Notary Public.
(Exit L.)
Mrs. Potash

(Rise)

And this is the thanks he gets for all he has done for you.

Irma

But Wommer, he doesn't want to run for Mayor.

Mrs. Potash

Say, he didn't want to send you to college did he, and I made him send you so you could tell them at the meeting tomorrow night that Mr. Aba Potash would run for Mayor.

All those in favor please say I, I, and don't you forget it.

(Exit L.)

(Irma moves pen and ink from table to Desk)

Irma

(Takes up MSS of speech)

What we need in this coming election is new blood and fresh ideas. We need a man who will stand for ideals...a man who holds the interests of the public sacred with those of himself...a man who will keep faith with himself and the public... We believe we have such a man in George J. Block...a man whose family tradition is one of honor...a man who in his own acts and beliefs represents the better and finer things...a man of honesty and ideals...a man...who...

(BLOCK has entered R. during the speech and X.L.)

Block

Go on...go on...

Irma

(Seeing him)

Mr. Block. I didn't know you --

Block

Go on. Tell me what else I am...don't leave me there... Really I am quite overcome, didn't know you thought so highly of me.

Irma

(Pointedly)

A mere political speech Mr. Block.

Block

Does that mean it is insincere.

Irma

It means that it is a public not a private document.

Block

Yet isn't it wonderful what a human note a political speech can have when spoken by --- by a woman.
Irr:Ria
(Meaningly)
I think you have come, Mr. Block, to discuss a purely
business matter...
(X.R. to sofa)

Block
I get your point... But let me be honest too. I haven't--
(X.R.)

Irma
But you said.

Block
I said I wanted to talk matters over with you. Well I do.

Irma
Mr. Block... really I...
(Sit on sofa R.)

Block
Oh, alright - alright - it is political ... and we are here
to talk politics.

Irma
(Looks at him a minute)
What is the matter with you tonight?

Block
Just what I've been asking myself... I wonder is it the light--
or the color of your hair-- I never noticed before you had
hair that turned red in the lamplight.

Irma
Mr. Block... are you trying to make love to me?

Block
That's it--you discovered it-- and to think I never knew what
was the matter--that's just what I am trying to do Irma.
(Sit on sofa R.)

Irma
I have known for some time this was bound to come.

Block
Oh you did!

Irma
Yes, I have even thought over its possibilities, every woman
knows when a man is going to propose to her and I have
thought this all out.
I like you.

Thanks.

I have even thought how it would be to spend the rest of my life with you.

We seem to have been thinking along the same lines.

We are young both of us - just now we seem to have a great deal in common because we are both free - but if we marry - then I would lose myself - you might talk about us going on together and doing big things together - but I would be just your wife --

(Rise and X.C.)

And you would not want to be that?

(Rise and X.R.C.)

Some day I may think differently - but just now - please let us leave the matter as it stands.

(Looks at her a minute)

You know what I have a mind to do?

What?

I have a mind to grab you and hug you and kiss you --

Mr. Block.

It's what I ought to do.

(As he sees her growing anger)

But, I wouldn't. After all I haven't the nerve.
Irma
Then the question is closed for the time being?

Block
Yes, but just the same that's what I ought to do.

Irma
(To divert him as she goes toward him)
Now in regard to your candidacy.

Block
(Eagerly)
Yes?

Irma
I mean your candidacy for Mayor --

Block
Oh.

Irma
(Sits L. of table)
You don't seem to take this very seriously, Mr. Block.

Block
(Sits R. of table)
Quite as seriously as the opposition would take it.

Irma
Would you have me think then that all you said to the Civic League was said merely for effect - that you have not been honest?

Block
I have been absolutely honest. I should like to be Mayor of this town. I feel that as Mayor I could do things and stand for things that would better the community - and go on, but I'd like to have a fling at it - but against the ring politics in this town I nor any other candidate wouldn't have a chance on earth.

Irma
Then you wouldn't accept the nomination?

Block
Oh, I'll accept anything - I'll do anything you want me to for your sake --

Irma
Mr. Block.
Well then to come down to hard facts. Stafford and his crowd has got this next election saved up! Stafford is going to take no chances. I heard just today that they are about to put over a new one. He is going after some poor dub, who may be honest as far as the community knows, and he is going to make him a figurehead of a Mayor.

(Irma starts)
You don't believe that.

(Irma rises)
Well, it's true. Stafford will give them a good Mayor, but one that he can put things over on - some vain weak-brained puppet behind whom Stafford will do his same dirty little tricks - and - what is it?

(Rise)

Irma

Mr. Stafford was just here.

Block

What? You say Stafford was here?

Yes.

Block

I suppose he wanted your support?

Yes.

Block

And you?

Irma

I refused it.

Block

Of course. He didn't by any chance tell you the name of his candidate?

Irma

He did?

Block

Who?

Irma

My father.

Block

What? Your father --- your ---

(Breaks out laughing)

Oh, that's good - that's the best I ever heard - your - your ---
(Stops short as he sees Irma looking at him)
I beg your pardon.

Irma
I think Mr. Block you won't have to wait to know my answer to any proposal you may make.

Block
Now see here, Irma, I was considering your father merely as a candidate for Mayor. His unfitness for such an office you know as well as I.

Irma
Yes, but I also know - saw in a flash - what you thought of him.

Block
That isn't fair and you know it isn't fair.

Irma
Yes, what you thought of us all.

(With sudden change)
I'm going to do it - I've made up my mind. I'm going to kiss you.

Irma
(Goes to door and calls)
Father - father - come.

Block
That isn't going to make any difference - that isn't going to stop me. I -

(Goes up to her but she stands rigid and her seriousness stops him. He becomes almost deferential and absolutely human and serious)
Forgive me. I'll never say another word until you ask me to.

(X.R. to arch)
(Enter POTASH L.)

Potash
Yes, yes, what is it?

Irma
Father, Mr. Block has something to say to you.

Potash
What? Mommer, mommer. Come quick. Mr. Block and Irma has got something to say to you. Well, well, Mr. Block I must say this is a surprise.

(X. to Block who has come down R.)
(Enter Mrs. Potash who is right on his heels)
Mrs. Potash
You've got to excuse my hair Mr. Block. If I don't do this I look a sight in the morning.

Irma
Just a moment, Mother. Mr. Block has something to say to father about the coming election.

Potash
The coming election? And for this she woke me out of a sound sleep. Come on, Mommer, You'll catch your death of cold here.
(X. to L.C.)

Mrs. Potash
But what about the coming election?
(Sits in arm chair L.)

Irma
I want you to tell father just what you told me about Stafford offering him the nomination.
(Potash sits L. of table)

Block
Really, I don't think it's necessary.

Irma
Very well, then I will tell it. Mr. Block has just said the reason that Stafford offered you the nomination was that he believed you would be an easy mark and would do whatever they wanted you to do.

Potash
Well that don't hurt my feelings none because I got no intentions of running and I ain't got nothing on under this except a night-shirt.

Mrs. Potash
I don't care what you got on you're going to run for Mayor of this town and that's all there is to it.

Block
I wouldn't advise him to, if I were you, Mrs. Potash. I didn't tell your daughter all that I heard this afternoon. I had no idea they meant your husband but what Stafford really said was that for the stuff they expected to put over in this town next year they needed to get for Mayor some cheap-skate from the South End.

Potash
The South end. Why that's where - that is the neighborhood where our people live. That's a Yiddisher medeena, Mommer.
Block
He seems to think that your people will stand for anything. The fact is that instead of this nomination being offered to you as an honor, it's an insult. An insult not alone to you but to our whole people.

Potash
Is that so? So this is what Mr. Stafford thinks is it.
All right, I'll show that Rosher --
(X.R. to telephone)

Mrs. Potash
Popper, what are you going to do?
(X.R. and sit on sofa)

Potash
Central. Hello, Central. Give me two two ring two and I hope that highwayman is in a sound sleep too - I hope he catches his death of cold the way I am - Hello, is this Mr. Stafford -
(Turn to Mrs. Potash)
And you wanted to run for Mayor, Mommer - you thought it was a great honor to be such a loafer - you would have one of our people stand before this community as a low life like that - a - Oh hello - is this Stafford. Just a few minutes ago, Stafford you offered me the nomination for Mayor - you said you wanted me to run as a great favor to you. You want me to help you run this town when you know very well that I ain't got the strength of character to run my own home. You know I ain't got the ability. You know I ain't got the education yet you try to fool me into thinking that it is an honor you are offering me. Now wait a minute. Do you think I would neglect my business? Do you think I would neglect my family? To run as a favor to you or anyone else? If you do, all I can tell you Stafford is, that you ain't as smart as I thought you was. Because I'm going to fool you. I've rung you up to tell you that I accept the nomination, and I will run for Mayor.

CURTAIN
"HIS HONOR - ABE POTASH"

ACT III
ACT III.

SCENE: Same as preceding act.


Crawford Now look here, Mr. Potash, you ain't doing yourself no good filling your mind with this stuff. I tell you that nobody never takes no stock in them criminal law writers.

Potash I think myself they're a lot of alarmists. I've been looking this thing up now for nearly ten minutes, Crawford, and so far I figure the boy has got coming to him, three hundred and twenty-five years.

Crawford How do you make that out?

Potash He's altered a public record in the first degree, he's altered a public record in the second degree, and he's also got on him, two degrees of larceny, two degrees of forgery. If he'd got them degrees in masonry instead of the tax office, Crawford, he'd be already a Mystic Shriner.

Crawford Now look here Mr. Potash, the more you read that stuff, the worse you'll feel.

Potash I know it. I've already come across a couple of crimes I've committed myself for which I could get ten years.

Crawford Why certainly. You're worrying yourself over nothing.

Potash Nothing? Is it nothing to worry over that my boy is in jail. Is it nothing to worry over that my only son who was always used to a good home, to good food is sitting now in a cell with nothing to eat but bread and water, and I sent him there myself?
Crawford

Well if that's all you're worrying about let me relieve your mind.

{ Goes to door and calls }

Mrs. Potash

Potash

(As HARRY and MRS. POTASH come in R.)

What are you doing here? I have said all I have got to say... and I won't hear anything more... I'm through...

Mrs. Potash

Come on Harry, we'll go across the street and get a cup of coffee till he's calmed down.

Potash

A cup of coffee! Why don't you take him to a matinee or something? Don't you know that boy is under $5,000 bail. Didn't I commit him to jail?

Mrs. Potash

Schmoose, Popper. Throw that bluff to them politicians not to me. He commits the boy to jail, he says. An idea. And if the boy gets sick in jail, who is going to take care of him, you? Oser!

( Exit Crawf ord R. )

Potash

(L.)

You are only making things worse, Mommer. If the boy was in trouble, and it wasn't his fault, I would go to jail for him, for the rest of my life, but he has made his own trouble, Mommer. The boy is a ganev - my own son - a thief.

Mrs. Potash

(C.)

Now, don't you say that again.

Potash

But Mommer, leben.

Mrs. Potash

Don't you dare call my boy a thief.

Potash

But look at the evidence?

Mrs. Potash

What do you care about the evidence. Be a father not a Mayor. Don't you know the boy didn't do it?
Potash

No.

Mrs. Potash

Well I do. A mother always knows when her son is innocent.

Potash

A mother never knows when her son is guilty, Mommer.

Harry

(E.)

Father.

Potash

I can't listen to you, Harry....I haven't got the right.

Harry

You've got to father.

Potash

Got to, he says. And did you ever listen to me? Didn't I tell you what would be the end, first bad company, next gambling and then thieving.

Harry

I'm not a thief.

Potash

maybe you ain't, but it's the law that if you ain't guilty, you've got to prove it.

Harry

I can prove it.

Mrs. Potash

You don't have to prove it. The law is that even if you would be guilty, they've got to prove it not you, and that's the law.

Potash

Is that so? Well let me tell you that I've been studying law now for the past twenty minutes and if he can't prove he's innocent, he's guilty.

Harry

I can prove it...to you.

(A to C.)

Potash

Can you prove it wasn't your handwriting on those books?
Can you prove you didn't go to Tobin's?
No.

Can you prove the money ain't gone?
No.

Then for God's sake, what can you prove?

I can prove that I am innocent... Now I'll admit anything you accuse me of... all that you say... I've been a bad lot and I've done what you told me not to do... I've gambled and I've been no good.

And this is proof to tell me what I already know.

But there's one thing father I've never done.

I'm glad of that. What is it?

I've never lied to you... never in all my life... not even when I could avoid a scolding from you... not to escape any punishment... never in all my life... not once have I lied to you... now, isn't it so? You know it's so... I haven't lied to you. I'm not going to lie to you. I don't care what they do to me... I don't care even if they send me to jail, but you've got to believe me, father... You've got to...

Got to... don't you think I want to?

Father, it's my word against theirs... my word against those books... my word against all that can be said against me... my word against those grafters and liars... father.
(Potash remains silent)
Mrs. Potash
well, ain't you got nothing to say to the boy?

Potash
What can I say? A judge must have evidence not words.

Harry
I am not talking to a judge. I am talking to my father.

(comes up to him)
Look at me, father, look straight into my eyes...

(As Potash looks steadily at him)

Now then. I tell you on my word of honor...yes on my word of honor... I didn't do it father I did not do it. Don't you believe me, father?

(Enter Crawford with Thomas Baker R.)

Baker
Alright... alright... this is my business.

Potash
Crawford, how many times did I tell you not to let people in here without announcing them.

Crawford
This is Tom Baker the county detective, your Honor.

Mrs. Potash
The County Detective?

Baker
Is this the young feller's that held for the grand jury?

Yes.

Baker
Alright, young feller, come along....

(Harry As R.)

Potash
Here, where are you taking him?

Baker
Well, where do you think I'm taking him? I'm taking him to jail.

(Potash goes back of desk on platform)

Mrs. Potash
You wouldn't positively do nothing of the sort. Tell popper, you've made a mistake and changed your mind.
Baker
That's got nothing to do with me. I'm here to execute this warrant.

Potash
What warrant?

Baker
The warrant for the arrest of this boy.

Potash
But I didn't sign no warrant....

Baker
This warrant is signed by the County Judge. It is issued on affidavits made by Comptroller Rothwell and Robert Stafford.

Potash
I don't care if they was made by Jacob H. Schiff and General Pershing. The boy is innocent.

Harry
(With joyful triumph)
Father, you do believe me...

Potash
Believe you? Of course I believe you. Do you think that any boy of mine who never told me a lie could stand there and make me look in his eyes and then tell me lies?

Baker
I can't help that. Here's the warrant and I've got to execute it.

Mrs. Potash
Popper, stop him... don't let him...

Potash
Mr. Baker, don't take that boy to the County jail. Just give me a half hour.

Baker
All right. I'll keep him outside - but remember, he's under arrest.

Harry
Don't you worry father. It doesn't matter... nothing matters so long as you believe me. The truth will come out... It's bound to come out... and if it doesn't... well... no matter what happens to me... don't let them put anything over on you.
(Mrs. Potash asks Harry and embraces him.)

Harry

Mother!

(Harry goes out with Baker and Crawford R.)

Mrs. Potash

(R.)

Well, this is what comes of acting so honorable. Rather
than see perfect strangers get malaria, he brings mis-
fortune on his whole family.

Potash

(L.)

Did I know this was going to happen, mommer?

Mrs. Potash

You should ought to have known. This ain't my son, he says,
this is the defendant. His own son he calls a defendant.
Who do you think you are? King Lear or something?

Potash

But mommer, Leben, this would have happened anyway.

Mrs. Potash

Suppose it would, did you have to send your own son to jail,
a good boy like that?

Potash

A boy that loaf's, gambles and fools away his time, where
would I send him to Florida? And besides, Mommer, what
could I do? You yourself told me not to sign. You
wouldn't want me to be a crook like Stafford. I only did
what I thought was right, was honest, and now this happens.
Aitzuris! I wish I was dead.

Mrs. Potash

Popper.

Potash

Suppose I am right. Suppose I am honest, who cares? I'm
a failure as a father. I'm a failure as a mayor. I'm
kaput.

(Sits L. of table)

Mrs. Potash

(Sits R. of table)

Now listen, Popper, don't take it so hard. You believe
that boy, don't you?
Potash

I believe him and you believe him, but is a jury going to believe him.

Mrs. Potash

Why wouldn't they if he tells them the same that he told you and looks straight in their eyes?

Potash

A father could tell by the eyes but not a juryman. A juryman is a juryman. He ain't an eye doctor.

Mrs. Potash

Then we've got to get a good detective and find out who did take that money.

Potash

And how are we going to get such a detective - on the installment plan? Detectives is a cash proposition, Moonner, and the first thing such a detective would do is to hire another detective to find out if I've got any money to pay him with, and the last detective wouldn't find none not even if he was a bloodhound.

Potash

(Enter Irma and Block R.)

Well Mr. Block, did you find out anything?

Block

Nothing new.

Mrs. Potash

Maybe if you went over them books again, maybe there's some mistake somewhere.

(Rises)

Irma

We did go over them again.

Potash

Yes -- yes.

Irma

There's no mistake. Three thousand dollars is missing.

Mrs. Potash

I don't care if only three dollars was missing. Harry didn't take it.

(Sit R. of table)
but that isn't going to save him. He's worse off if he's innocent, because that means that the men who really did it, are trying to frame him.

Potash
All this we know, but what do the books show?

Block
On February fifteenth, one thousand dollars taxes were paid and that thousand has disappeared. On the twentieth, another thousand went and on the first of March the last thousand was taken.

Potash
Three thousand dollars, and on what property was these taxes paid?

Block
Lots twenty to twenty-four inclusive in block three hundred on the City map.

Potash
Who owns that property?

Block
The name on the books is Gooding.

Potash
Gooding! Not Henry Gooding -

Yes. Henry Gooding.

Potash
Gooding, and she wants to hire a detective yet. Officer Crawford? Officer Crawford! Officer Crawford!

(Enter Crawford R.)

Crawford
Yes, sir.

Potash
Send out for Gooding and bring him here, drunk or sober.

Crawford
And where will I find him?

Potash
In Blake's drug store, and if he ain't there, the Blue Front Livery is also a blind pig.

(Exit Crawford R.)
Irma
And what are you going to do if Mr. Gooding does come here?
The books show that the money was paid.

Potash
What I want to know is, who signed them tax bills and that is what I'm going to find out.

Block
But how do you know that Gooding has those receipted tax bills?

Potash
He had this morning and he ain't lost them. Even a schickkerer don't light cigars with receipted tax bills.

Block
Now see here, Mr. Potash. I've sent for my father, a man of great deal of experience. I've told him the facts of the case. I want you to have a talk with him.

Potash
Sure, sure. I shall be glad to talk with him, but it ain't necessary.

Block
I think it is.

Mrs. Potash
You don't understand. You still think Harry is guilty. Yes, you do. that's because you haven't any real interest in this.

Block
Oh but I have. I have almost as much interest as you and Mr. Potash.

Potash
How so?

Block
Well, you see, Mr. Potash, I've just asked Irma to marry me.

Potash
What?

Block
And she's accepted me.

Potash
Accepted you? Morner -

(Irma rises and goes to block)
Mrs. Potash

(Rises)

Irma leben. When did this happen?
(Several loud smacking kisses)

Potash

(wrinking block's hand)

Well, well, well, this is a surprise. I'm sure I don't know what to say. It hits me like a rainbow out of a clear sky. One day she's never going to marry nobody, and the next day she's engaged. Well, all I can say is, you've got a wonderful girl, Mr. Block, and a wonderful housekeeper too. With all his college education, she can cook just as good as if she couldn't sign her own name.

(As he sees Mrs. Potash weeping)

Nu, Mommer, what's the matter now?

Mrs. Potash

And to think that we couldn't afford to give our only daughter even an engagement reception.

(sits R. of table)

Irma

But mother, dear, we don't intend to have a reception.

Block

And we want a quiet wedding.

Potash

You're going to have a quiet wedding, because if orchestras came at a dollar a head, I couldn't afford a triangle player.

Mrs. Potash

And what for a trousseau could we buy her?

Irma

But I don't want a trousseau, mother.

Mrs. Potash

You must have a trousseau.

Block

Never mind the trousseau.

Potash

All right. She'll wear her old trousseau.

Mrs. Potash

Why! What do you think a trousseau is?
I don't know what it is, but if we've got one round the house, let them have it. And anyhow, Mommer leben, it ain't the furniture that makes the home, it's the people which is in it. Would you believe me, Mr. Block, when we got married we was as happy as two birds in the bush.

And we are still.

Sure we are. We had our quarrels. We had our little differences, but what did they amount to because if you really and truly love your wife, what does it matter even if the rinderbrust is a little dried up.

(Down L.)

And when did you ever get dried up rinderbrust?

When we first got married, Mommer leben.

Is that so?

Yes, that's so, and today yet you couldn't cook rinderbrust.

You don't tell me, and when do you eat rinderbrust without kicking anyway.

And anyhow if I don't like rinderbrust why do you give it to me.

Should I give you chicken every night on twenty dollars a week housekeeping money?

Well then give me once in a while fish.

The last time I give you fish you wouldn't touch it.

The last time you gave me fish you gave it me three nights running. I like fish but I ain't an aquarium.

Father!
And that's the way it is, Mr. Block. You can have our little differences, but you love her just the same, ain't it so, momma?

(Pinciether cheek and Aes L.)

Now listen, Father, George and I have decided to keep our engagement secret for a time.

Mrs. Potash

(Sits R. of table)

Secret. Say, if I would be engaged to such a fine young man I would announce it in every paper in town.

Irma

No, Mother. We can't. It isn't fair and I won't do it. This engagement is not to be told anyone... not even George's father -- until this business about Harry is settled.

Mrs. Potash

Harry. What has Harry got to do with it?

Potash

She's right, momma. How would it look if I would advertise: "The Honorable Abe Potash announces the engagement of his daughter Irma and at the same time begs to inform the public that his son Harry, is in jail."

(Enter Crawford R.)

Crawford

Say there's a gent out here who says his name is Block...

Block

My father!

Potash

Well show him in... What are you waiting for?

Irma

(As Crawford goes out)

No not a word to him father about George and me. You understand?

(Mrs. Potash and Irma go up R.)

Potash

Sure...sure...

(Aes R. As Block Sr. enters)

Well, Mr. Block I certainly am glad to meet you. This is my wife and this is my daughter Irma.
Mrs. Potash...and Miss Potash.
(Shakes hands with Irma)
I am very glad to meet you, Miss Potash.

Irma
Thank you, Mr. Block.

Potash
Won't you sit down, Mr. Block.

Block Sr.
Thank you.

(Sits R. of table. Potash goes back of table)
Well, George, you see I came at once.

Block Jr.
(L.) Now rather I want to explain to you.

Block Sr.
You have already, I understand perfectly. Now, Mr. Potash
I admire you...I respect you...but...really you ought to have
known what you were up against.

Potash
I did.

Block Sr.
And you went into this thing with your eyes open?

Potash
I did.

Block Sr.
Then I'm afraid you have to take the consequences.

Block Jr.
Now see here, rather, you can't mean that. You're not
going to stand by and not do what you can to help.

Block Sr.
And just why are you so keen about this?

Block Jr.
Because of a sense of right...a sense of public duty...a sense of
patriotism...a sense...of

Block Sr.
And this young lady had nothing to do with it, I suppose.
Potash
You knew then about my daughter and your son?

Block Sr.
Sure I knew. Now let's get down to business -
(Potash sits L. of table)

Mrs. Potash
Then you are going to help my husband?

Block Sr.
This is not merely a husband's affair now...It is mine too.
It concerns us all. Now tell Mr. Potash what are your plans?

Potash
My plans are that I am going to prove to you and everybody
that my boy didn't take this money.

Block Sr.
Yet George tells me that there's a chain of circumstances
that proves he did.

Potash
But a chain has got to be one hundred per cent links, other­
wise it ain't a chain and I have found in this chain a
missing link.

(Enter CRAWFORD holding GOODING by the arm)
And here is the missing link himself.

Gooding
What is this, Crawford, a lodge meeting or something?

Potash
A-ha! Drunk!

Gooding
Oh no I ain't. I may be feeling good but this ain't what
I'd call drunk.

Potash
Well, you're hard to please Gooding.

Gooding
No I ain't. It's knowledge...knowledge, Mr. Potash and
I've got my idea of how drunk a man should be if he can
afford to get drunk. And I can afford it. I'm a rich man.

Potash
(Gooding stumbles toward C. Block Sr. stops him)
Yes on my money.
Gooding

No on my property. When the City takes that land I'm going to be worth forty thousand dollars.

Potash

Then you're getting drunk on paper profits, because when the city takes that property you won't own it.

Gooding

Who says I won't?

Potash

I do. You come to me with a hard luck story about it killing you if I don't endorse your notes and when I do you take the money for drink instead of for taxes.

Gooding

Who says I didn't pay my taxes?

Potash

I do.

Gooding

Didn't I show you my tax receipts this morning...here in this very room.

Potash

You showed me something...a piece of paper...I didn't look at it.

Gooding

I showed you tax receipts.

(Takes out tax receipts from pocket)

these tax receipts. So don't come any bluffs on me. These receipts show that I paid my taxes and you nor anyone else can prove that I didn't...

Potash

(Comes down to Gooding and grows very ingratiating)

I am not trying to prove that you didn't Gooding. I am trying to prove that you did. It's to my interest also to know that you paid. So if you will just let me see those tax receipts for a minute...

(Grabs receipts from Gooding and steps Pote Sr. stops him)

Gooding

Here you give me back those tax receipts. You give them back to me.
Potash

(As Gooding goes toward them)
Officer Crawford take this gentleman in the next room and see that he gets as sober as he thinks he is...

Gooding

(As Crawford takes hold of him)
Here you let me be...you can't do a thing like this.....

Crawford

Oh, come on.

(Exit Crawford and Gooding R.)

Potash

Now then, Mr. Block, I am going to show to you that the signature on these bills ain't my boy's signature. I am going to show to you that that signature is a forgery. Here is where I am going to prove my boy's innocence. He has been libeled long enough, that poor boy, but here is the truth at last. I am his father, and I know what his signature is like. So this is the goods. This is final.

(He opens the tax receipts)
Oh, my God!

(He sinks into a chair L. of table)

Mrs. Potash

Then it is his signature?

Potash

Worse...It's a rubber stamp.

Everybody

Potash

A round rubber stamp. It's got a date on it and it says: Paid Department of Taxes and Assessments, Damascus, N.Y.

Block Sr.

And there's no signature on it?

Potash

Not even an initial.

Block Sr.

And what does this prove, Potash?

Mrs. Potash

It proves that my husband is a rotten detective.
Potash

Could I smell it that there is no name on that tax bill. Even Harris Pinkerton couldn't suspect that tax bills is receipted with rubber stamps. But I'm right, Mr. Block... just the same I'm right...

(As Block Sr. smiles)

You don't believe it?

Block Sr.

(Rises)
What difference does it make whether I believe it or not? The point is you can't prove it.

(Xs R.)

Mrs. Potash

Then what do you suggest Mr. Block?

Block Sr.

What do I suggest? I suggest compromise.

Potash

Compromise...you mean that I should....

Block Sr.

It's just as if you were playing a game of checkers with these fellows. They have won the first few moves and you have lost some men. Now it's up to you to save the game.

Potash

That's just what I want to do.

Block Sr.

Then compromise. That's the only way to do it. Wait for their next move to catch them. Then when they try something else, be sure of yourself, and then...

Potash

Wait a minute...Do you mean you would have me sign this bill?

Block Sr.

I would have you do just that.

Potash

But Mr. Block, you don't know what you are asking me?

Block Sr.

Now see here, Potash, I don't want to add to your troubles, I want to help you. I admire you. I admire the stand you're taking. And if it were a mere question of money you could count on me for every cent I have. But money won't save you...you may as well face the fact. They've got you, and you simply have got to come through.
Potash
Don't you suppose I've considered all this? I know what
this means to me.

Block Sr.
Sure, you know what it means to you but I want you to see
and see clearly what it means not only to you, but to your
family... to your wife... to your daughter... yes and to me.

Mrs. Potash
To you, Mr. Block?

Block Sr.
I want you to put yourself in my place. Suppose your son
were going to marry my daughter... suppose you were willing
and more than willing that they should marry and then... a
thing like this came up... honestly now... what would you do?

Block Jr.
Father... that's not fair... Irma.

Irma
You're not to think of us father, no matter what he says...

Block Jr.
No, I promise you it won't make any difference.

Irma
It will make a difference. Our engagement is broken Mr.
Block.

(Up R. to window)

Block Jr.
Irma... Mr. Potash I beg of you...

(Xes down L. - Mrs. Potash to Irma)

Potash
Your father is right and I know exactly how he feels. He
don't want his son to marry into a family which has got
staring them in the face a large public washing of dirty
linen, and I don't blame him.

Block Sr.
That's just the point, Mr. Potash and that's how it is.
Sign this bill... give them their park... it's plenty good
enough for any community that elects politicians... com-
promise and I will stand back of you... your daughter will
be happily married... your son will go free and clear.
Refuse and... well... I'm sorry...

Potash
But Mr. Block, just listen to me.

(Mrs. Potash comes down to back of table.)
It's enough Popper, who are you that you should set up your judgment against this gentleman? You've done enough to show how honest you are. Consider now your children. Consider now your wife.

So that's the way you think too, Mommer?

What else is there to think?

(Turns to Block Jr.)

And you, George?

I can see your side of it, Mr. Potash, and I can see my father's.

Yes?

I'm afraid my father is right.

And you were going to clean up the politics of this town.

There's no other way, Mr. Potash, this time.

So.

(Turn to Irma)

Well, Irma...this concerns you too.

(Breaks out crying)

I don't know...I just don't know...

(Come down to table)

I'm not thinking of myself...I don't care anything about myself...but it's you...and mother...and Harry...and...

So I see you are all agreed.

(Enter BRADY R.)
Potash, what the dickens is all this I hear about you down at the depot.

(Stops short as he sees Block and Irma and the others)

Potash

Come right in, Mr. Brady. You're in at the death. Political reform has passed away in this town and you're just in time for the funeral.

But what's happened?

Potash

What's happened is that as mayor I tried to keep my skirts clean, and—well I run out of carbon.

But I don't understand...

Potash

Mr. Brady you know about this park and the trouble my son is in. Now Mr. Brady I put it up to you.

But Mr. Davis.

Potash

I think I ought to tell you first that my wife wants me to sign it, my family wants me to sign it...and these gentlemen...my friends...say I must sign it...So, Mr. Brady it comes down to this: Shall my boy be punished when he's innocent, or shall I be guilty and go free. Now then Mr. Brady what do you say.

Mr. Potash, there's only one thing I can say.

Brady

Yes, yes.

Potash

This is a question that no man can decide for you...this is something that you've got to decide for yourself.

Thank you, Mr. Brady. That's what I thought. I have decided. I ain't going to sign.
Potash

Mrs. Potash

Block Sr.

Now Potash, don't be a fool....

Potash

I have decided and I don't care what happens. I will not sign.

Block Sr.

Alright then...I've done all I can. If you insist on ruining yourself and your family...I'm sorry but I can't help it.

(Goes to table and gets hat)

Mrs. Potash

Mr. Block please, give him a couple more minutes to think it over. Maybe it ain't that he's so honest. Maybe he's only stubborn.

Block Sr.

I'm sorry Mrs. Potash....

(Starts R.)

Block Jr.

Father...just a minute please.

Block Sr.

It's no use George, I'm through. If you change your mind, Potash, let me know.

(Starts out and as he does so comes face to face with Stafford who enters)

Stafford

Oh excuse me....

Block Jr.

Father...that is Mr. Stafford. Won't you wait just until you hear what he has to say?

Stafford

This gentleman can't possibly be interested in what I have to say. My business is with Mr. Potash.

(Xes to C.)

Potash

My business is their business. I've got no secrets from them. And anyway they know just as well as I do why you are here. You want to find out if the condition of the patient is still unchanged. You want to know if I am getting feverish or cold feet or something. Well, I ain't. You arrived just at the chronological moment, Stafford,
These people have just been trying to make me change my mind. They are my family and friends and if they couldn't to it, how could you?

Stafford
Change your mind about what?

Potash
About that public swamp.

Stafford
I suppose you mean the public park. I thought that matter had been disposed of.

Potash
Then what are you here for?

Stafford
I came about these notes of yours which I hold.

Potash
You know, Mr. Stafford, I've got to admire you. You don't overlook anything. You are a regular committee of arrangements. You get me to give endorsements to Gooding, and if that don't work, then you put my son in jail, and if that don't work, then there is the notes I owed to the bank, and if this don't work I suppose you will use poison gas or something.

Stafford
Are you going to pay those notes or not, Potash. I want you to give me a simple answer.

Potash
You want me to give you nothing. This is a blind, a bluff. You don't need the money for those notes. You need real big money. You could afford to give me those notes. You could afford it. Give me back the Gooding notes. You would even give me back my son, if I would sign that resolution. You ain't here to demand payment of any notes. You are here to lay the last straw on the camel's neck. You deceive nobody.

Stafford
Once more, Potash, I tell you that the payment of these notes had nothing to do with the park. I bought these notes, and I bought them legitimately. You endorsed Gooding's notes of your own free will, and as for your son being in jail... well, is it my fault that your son is a crook?
Potash

(Choking with rage and trying to attack Stafford)
Liar, Thief, Schwinder -- Leggo, Mommer, I'll show this feller. -- Will you let go my coat.

Mrs. Potash
Now, Popper, you are all excited. You'll make yourself sick.

Block Jr.
Mr. Potash, this doesn't help things any.

Irma
You'd better go, Mr. Stafford.

Stafford
I'll not go, until he tells me what he intends to do.

Potash
I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'll stand for no bluffs, Stafford. I'll stand for no blackmail.

Stafford
Blackmail! Look out what you say,

Potash
I'll say what I please and I'll call you what I please. And if you don't like it. There are courts. You can sue me for libel.

Stafford
I'll sue you all right, but it won't be for libel. Now, then, are you going to pay those notes or aren't you?

Potash
I am not.

Stafford
All right then...
(Starts out)

Brady
Here, wait a minute.

Stafford
Well, what are you going to say about it?

Brady
Mr. Potash is going to pay those notes today.

Potash
But Mr. Brady. I can't....I haven't got the money.
No, but I have.

But Mr. Brady, I have no security to offer you. (Sits L. of Table)

You have the best security in the world. You are honest. Now, Mr. Stafford, I want you to know that our firm is back of this gentleman and that every obligation of his will be met.

Just a moment.

What now?

You are not going to do anything of the sort.

And why not?

Because this happens to be my job, Stafford, you can't budge this man. You can imprison his son, you can ruin his business, you can do anything and everything, but you're simply wasting time. This man is more than mayor of a small town. He is a trustee for the good name of his entire race. If you think that you can make him do anything but what he thinks is right, you are bucking up against a thousand years of history and a family of several million people. We are both members of that family, and I wish it was my privilege to stand in his shoes. I wish this was my opportunity, my sacrifice. I envy him his misfortune.

I'll schenck it to you.

Then you are going to help him?

If money can help this man I'll help him. (Up C.)

Thank you, Mr. Block and you too, Mr. Brady, but money can't help me. It isn't a question of money. It is my boy's innocence. If I go broke, I can always start over again, as a pack peddler even, but if my boy goes to jail, it would kill me.
That's just the point. He is going to jail....he's guilty.

He's not. He's innocent.

Can you prove it?

I've got the proofs here in my hand, - if I could only read them. These tax receipts.

(Looks steadily at the tax receipts)

Where did you get those?

Where should he get them? From Gooding of course.

Then Gooding was here then...

(Still looking at tax receipts)

If I could only read them...

Now see here, Potash. It doesn't make any difference what that drunken fool says. I tell you --

(Potash is looking at the receipts he has drawn his finger and thumb across them and now with a sudden exclamation he stares at his thumb)

Popper, what is it?

Now lock here, Potash. I don't know how you got those receipts off Gooding, what pressure you put on him to make him give them up...

(After having compared the papers in his hands utters an exclamation of triumph)

Father...Father...What is it?

What is it? I'll show what it is.

(Calls)

Officer Crawford.

(Crawford enters)
Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Potash

I want you to go down and get that fellow Gooding.

(As Crawford starts to go)

And on your way back step into the tax office and ask Comptroller Rothwell to come here...and Crawford...you will probably find Mr. Evans, President of the Council with him. Bring him too. Now hurry, Crawford. Hurry.

Crawford

Yes sir, yes sir.

(Goes out R.)

Stafford

Now, you listen to me. I don't know whether you think you've got something up your sleeve or not or whether you're just bluffing - but however, it is get the facts, Potash...get the facts.

Potash

That's just what I'm going to get.

Stafford

I've been too long in this game not to know what I'm doing, and I know exactly where I stand in this matter. Every step that I have taken has been legal. The Damascus Realty Company owns that park property. It paid its value for it.

Potash

I'll bet it did and no more than value either.

Stafford

Those notes of yours that I bought up, I bought up legitimately...

Potash

Did I say you didn't?

Stafford

And as for your son, what more do you want than the way he kept the city's books.

Potash

Did I claim he was an elegant bookkeeper?

Stafford

Then I have only got one last thing to say to you. I've been political boss in this town for twenty years and in all that time I've never pulled a bone.
Potash

There I don't agree with you! You pulled a bone when you picked me out for mayor.

Stafford

You're right...it was worse than a bone...it was a crime. And now, Potash - now that you know how things stand, I'm going.

Potash

(As Stafford starts to go)

Alright, Mr. Stafford...but...if I was you I would wait until your friends come for I think there is going to be something interesting happen...and in a little town like this where there are so few amusements I don't want you to miss anything.

(Enter CRAWFORD with GOODING, followed by ROTHWELL and EVANS)

Ah, here are our friends.

(Rothwell) Well Stafford everything all fixed?

Stafford

(Goes to Gooding) Drunk. Didn't I tell you to lay off that stuff?

Gooding

Drunk...I wish I was -- I'm getting damn sober.

Stafford

Now you come along with me.

Potash

Wait a minute...

Stafford

You can't keep this man here against his will --

Potash

(Bangs with his gavel on his desk)

Officer Crawford, bring Mr. Gooding up here to the desk...

(Gooding)

I want my tax receipts back...you stole them from me and I want them back.

Potash

And you're going to get them back. Now Gooding in the first place I want you to get it out of your head that I am...
trying to do you any harm. Haven't I always been your friend...haven't I always stood by you?

Gooding

Yes but.--

Potash

Well Gooding I am still your friend and all I want of you, Gooding is to tell me just a few things. Now then, You paid these tax bills, yourself?

Gooding

(Looks at Stafford)

Sure I did.

Potash

And how did you pay them? By check or cash?

Gooding

With money of course.

Potash

Now Gooding can you remember the dates you paid them? Well --

Gooding

Well - aren't the dates of payment stamped on them?

Potash

And you paid them on these dates stamped on them?

Gooding

I did.

Potash

(Taking up the tax receipts)

Then according to these stamps you paid these bills on January 20th-- February 10th and March 1st. Is that right?

Gooding

You've got the dates in front of you, haven't you?

Potash

Those are the dates on your receipts, Gooding.

Gooding

Well then, these are the dates I paid them.

Potash

You'll swear to that?

Stafford

Sure, he'll swear to it.
Potash

(Disregarding Stafford)

Gooding will you swear to that?

Gooding

Yes, I'll swear to it.

Potash

Then gentlemen, that's all I want to know. Crawford look that door.

Stafford

Here, what is this...

Potash

Now then gentlemen, one of you is going out of here a free man by turning State's evidence and telling the truth. The others are going to jail. So, which shall it be? I don't suppose I need to ask you Mr. Stafford...

Stafford

Don't be a damn fool, Potash... why you...

Potash

(Turning from him and thus cutting him short)

You, Mr. Comptroller Rothwell?

Rothwell

Potash. I give you my word...you're wrong...all wrong and...

Potash

Well, Evans -- how about it?

Evans

I don't know what you're talking about...I think you're...

Davis

So it comes down to you, Gooding. Now Gooding I am not going to try and work on your feelings. I ain't going to remind you it would kill your wife if you went to jail. I wouldn't even tell you my side of it. What it means to me, what it means to my poor wife to see our only son go to jail for something he didn't do. I am going to tell you just the hard facts. You are sober and you know what they mean... Gooding I have got the goods on you. You are party to a scheme by these fellers and have been used by them. You never paid the money for those tax receipts.

Stafford

Why of course he paid it...

Potash

You never paid it, Gooding and I can prove it. Now then
tell the truth and I give you my word that I will do every-
ing in my power to help you...to see that you get off.,
tell the truth, Gooding.

Stafford
He's drunk...what does he know...

Potash
He's sober as you are Stafford...and he knows.

Stafford
Don't you say anything, Gooding...they're trying to trick
you--they haven't anything on you...

Potash
I haven't eh? Now Gooding look here - when I run my hand
across those tax receipts the ink from the rubber stamp it was
stamped with came off on my thumb. That showed it wasn't
twenty-four hours old, and another thing; these tax receipts
were dated a month apart yet the ink was the same on all of
them...it came off all of them no matter what their dates.
And then another thing...look at these other tax bills...
They are bills for my store property and my house. They
were paid the same days these bills were supposed to be paid,
but the ink on my bills is dry. It don't smudge and it don't
smell from carbolic acid. The ink of these, your bills,
is wet and it does smell from carbolic acid showing it was
just been stamped, It's the truth now, Gooding, the truth
or jail...which?

Gooding
It no use, Stafford,
(Turns to Potash)
It was a frame-up Mr. Potash. The whole thing. I never
paid the money.

Stafford
Why the man's crazy. He doesn't know what he's saying.
Come on, boys.
(They start out)

Potash
One moment. I am going to hold court here.

Stafford
Now look here, you tried that trick this morning and

Potash
I ain't going to waste no time the way I did this morning.
You made me the chief magistrate of this city and if I
don't send you to jail with the right etiquette, you've
only got yourself to blame. Officer Crawford.
Yes, sir.

Potash

Take these men downstairs to the lockup, and keep them there till I send you the proper papers.

Evans

For God's sake, what are you going to do?

Potash

I'm going to hold you crooks for the action of the grand jury.

Rothwell

But we're entitled to bail.

Potash

You're entitled to whatever is coming to you, and you're going to get it. Now out of here, before I kick you out.

Evans

You got no power to do this.

Potash

I haven't eh?

Rothwell

Certainly he hasn't.

Stafford

Come on boys. I'll telephone the County Judge and be out of here in 10 minutes.

(Exits R. followed by Evans - Rothwell and Crawford)

Potash

Ten minutes. I should live long enough to see you serve half your sentence.

(Comes down from platform to C.)

Block Sr.

Good Heavens, Potash. How did you figure this out! Were you ever a Detective?

Potash

No I was a rubber stamp peddler. And believe me I would sooner again be a rubber stamp peddler than take another term as Mayor.

Mrs. Potash

Don't run for mayor popper. Run for Governor.
Governor?

Potash

What do you want to drive now; a steam yacht?

C U R T A I N