

GERALD. (*Offstage.*) All right, darling.

(**ENID** goes to the kitchen door and calls.)

ENID. Mrs. Birch? You can clear away now, Mrs. Birch.

(**MRS. BIRCH** enters and begins clearing the tea.)

Take the rest of that cake home with you. The children will like it. How are they, by the way?

MRS. BIRCH. Tommy has cut his finger to the bone – and Emma – she pulled the kettle over herself and scalded herself something cruel. And Mary, she’s coughing something terrible.

ENID. Dear me, I am sorry.

MRS. BIRCH. What with my being out all day working, Ma’am, they don’t get looked after, what you might call, proper – kind as the neighbours are.

ENID. I suppose your husband is out of work, Mrs. Birch?

MRS. BIRCH. No, he isn’t out of work, Ma’am.

(*A pause.*)

I’ve had trouble.

ENID. Trouble?

MRS. BIRCH. Yes, Ma’am. I’d as soon tell you myself in case you were to come to hear of it. A cleaner, straighter man than my Tom never lived – and comfortable and happy we were. And then out of the blue, as you might say, along comes a woman one day and ‘Tom,’ she says, ‘And so I’ve found you at last,’ she says. And would you believe it, Ma’am, she was his own lawful wedded wife that he had deserted.

ENID. Oh, how dreadful, Mrs. Birch.

MRS. BIRCH. Bigamy, Ma’am. That’s what it was and they sent him to prison and I never dreaming of any such thing all these years. But you never know with a man.

ENID. No.

MRS. BIRCH. You never know, Ma’am, what’s coming up out of his past.