

to go before I can please myself *who* I get married to. We can hold on till then, can't we?

**Susan** It's not worth it, Terry. She'd find some other way of stopping you.

~~Alice You must be a gypsy. You can see yourself out, can't you?~~ Terry—  
go put the kettle on.

*Terry stands transfixed*

*Now!*

*Susan exits L, closing the door behind her. Terry exits R slowly*

(*Calling*) And don't be all day about it. (*She takes off her coat and hat*)  
And now I'd like to have a quiet word with you, Sam Early.

*Sam winces*

Sit.

*Sam sits on the sofa*

How long has this been going on?

**Sam** How long has what been going on?

**Alice** Him—with her. (*She moves to him*)

**Sam** I've no idea.

**Alice** (*in a voice heavy with scorn*) Do you mean to tell me that your own son has been running around with that girl long enough for him to think he wants to marry her—and you didn't know about it?

**Sam** No. I'd never clapped eyes on her before.

**Alice** Well all I can say, Sam Early, is that you're either a liar or a fool—and I know which one of 'em *I* think it is.

**Sam** So do I. I were a fool ever to have married you, Alice. You've done nothing but make my life a misery since the day we got wed, and now you're starting on our Terry.

**Alice** Made *your* life a misery? And what about mine? What sort of a life do you think I've had? Slaving away over a hot stove every day for the last nineteen years. Washing, scrubbing, trying to make ends meet on what pittance you bring home each week. I've been a good wife to you, Sam Early, better than you'll ever know. Much, much better.

**Sam** I know you've worked wonders, Alice, but a chap wants to have a bit of peace once in a while. I can't even take a breath in me own house without asking your permission to do it. Hang it all. Our Terry's—

**Alice** (*interrupting*) Too young to know his own mind, and as long as I've got any say in the running of this household, he'll do as I tell him . . . without argument. And that goes for you as well.

**Sam** Aye, you've got me well trained, haven't you?

**Alice** If I have, it's taken long enough. (*She turns away*) Anyway, there's only room for one boss in this family, and we all know who that is, don't we? (*Silence from Sam*) I said don't we?

**Sam** (*resignedly*) Yes, Alice.

**Alice** Right—and that's the way it's going to stay. (*She moves to the door R and opens it*) Terry? Terry?

*Alice exits down the passage*

(*Off*) Where are you? Terry?

*She re-enters*

He's gone out. (*She hurries to the window*) If he's gone chasing that Rickworth girl I'll wring his grubby little neck for him. (*She looks out*) He has. (*Rapping furiously on the glass*) Terry! Terry! (*She turns to Sam*) Just wait till he comes back.

**Sam** What makes you so sure he will?

**Alice** (*darkly*) He'd better.

**Sam** You'll push him that bit too much, one of these days. You can't tell youngsters what they can and what they can't do nowadays.

**Alice** Who says I can't? A good rattle round the earholes is what I'd give 'em all. They get far too much of their own way, these modern teenagers. Long-haired layabouts, that's all they are. Like him next door. Eustace Sutton. There's a perfect example of young British youth. Too idle to scratch himself. I blame the parents for it, but its not going to happen in this house. As long as our Terry stays here, he'll do as he's told.

*There is a loud knocking on the back door off R*

And if that's the insurance man, go tell him he's not getting anything this week. I'll pay him double next.

**Sam** (*tiredly*) Aye. (*He rises*)

**Alice** Well jump to it, then. By the time you get there he'll have started worrying in case he's got to pay out.

*Sam exits*

*Alice moves to the table and moves the vase of flowers to the sideboard. She takes a cloth out of the drawer and covers the table. She then gets cups, saucers and plates from the sideboard cupboard, and begins to set them out*

*Sam enters R followed by Joe Gittings. He is a typical retired working-class fellow, aged between sixty-five and seventy. He wears a pair of dirty, baggy trousers tucked into boots. A shapeless sweater over an old union shirt, and a flat cap. He is spectacled, and a pipe is stuck in his mouth*

**Sam** It's Joe.

**Alice** (*without turning*) And what's he want?

**Joe** (*brightly*) 'Lo, Alice.

**Sam** He's just popped round to see if I wanted to go down to the allotment with him.