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Henry
Terry
Tom
Shirley

HENRY (as TOM wanders to above the sofa) But there's something I want to say to you, Tom.

TOM Then say it, Henry.

HENRY In private.

(SHIRLEY takes a mirror from her handbag and looks at herself.)

TOM Spit it out, mate.

(HENRY hesitates before closing the door and taking a few paces into the room.)

HENRY I just want to know if—well, if you, if you're fond of her.

TOM (sincerely) I'm in love with her.

(SHIRLEY registers pleasure as she puts away her mirror.)

HENRY It's not a trick?

TOM (indignantly as he crosses D.L.) Why should it be a trick?

HENRY Then for her sake, you ought to wait before telling Mum.

TOM She's going to be told tonight. (He spreadeagles himself in the chair D.R.)

HENRY But you're asking too much from Shirley.

SHIRLEY (glancing at TOM) You can't ask too much from someone who loves you.

TOM (to HENRY) D'you hear that? Now isn't that nice? Don't you think that's nice?

(Three children are heard screaming their way upstairs and calling for 'Uncle Henry'.)

SHIRLEY (surprised) Who's arrived?

TOM At a rough guess I'd say about three of Terry's kids.

SHIRLEY How many's he got then?

TOM Five, and one on the way.

HENRY (beaming) Hear the little blighters? They're calling for me.

TOM Yer, they love their Uncle Henry, don't they, Henry?

TERRY (off) Shut up! I said be quiet! And if you go into Nannie's room, I'll thump you! (As he runs upstairs.) I said not into Nannie's room!

HENRY (as the children's voices fade) Better go to them before they get a wallop.

TOM (quickly crossing upstage to join HENRY) Bring 'em in here, Henry. Introduce them to Shirley.

HENRY (his smile disappearing) You know they're not allowed.

SHIRLEY Not allowed?

HENRY (a shade uncomfortable) Mum put it out of bounds after they'd done a pile of damage.

TOM (wandering down to above sofa) One of them broke an egg-cup, Shirley.

HENRY It had a great sentimental value to Mum.

(HENRY opens the door and TERRY enters carrying a bunch of flowers. He is a thin, fairly tall man of thirty-four, with a long, rather woebegone face. SHIRLEY rises and eases L.)

TERRY Where's that loud-mouthed, skinny, no good ignorant lazy lout— (Seeing SHIRLEY.) Who are you?

SHIRLEY (rather taken aback) Shirley.

(TERRY gazes at her before turning his attention on TOM, who is grinning away. SHIRLEY sits in armchair D.L.)

TERRY (as TOM joins him) You left a live cable dangling from the loft of plot seven. I could have been electrocuted.

TOM Wasn't my fault. I couldn't find no conduit. Anyway, I think it's a dead liberty calling us in for repairs. After all, they only moved into the house last week. Everything would have righted itself.

TERRY If everyone did their work properly, there'd be no repairs to do.

TOM Hark at you! Just hark at you. Who built a broom cupboard right behind the door so that you had to walk into the kitchen sideways?

(He walks sideways to armchair R. where he sits.)

TERRY (mumbling) Everyone can make a mistake now and again. I'm no exception.

TOM You are, mate, because you never stop making them. (TERRY turns and points the flowers at SHIRLEY.)

HENRY (quickly) Did you find time to look at the staircase of plot twelve, Terry?

TERRY (sitting on right arm of sofa) I had to, didn't I? They was moving in this afternoon.

HENRY Was it much away from the wall?

TERRY About an inch.

TOM It was only half an inch when I noticed it last night. (Grinning.) They ought to be delighted. They're getting a moving staircase for nothing.