

## An Inspector Calls

### CHARACTERS

Arthur Birling  
Sybil Birling - his wife  
Sheila Birling - his daughter  
Eric Birling - his son  
Edna - maid  
Gerald Croft - Sheila's fiancé  
Inspector Goole.

All 3 acts, which are continuous, take place in the dining room of the Birling's house in Brumley, an industrial city in the north Midlands. It is an evening in spring, 1912.

The dining room is of a fairly large suburban house, belonging to a prosperous manufacturer. It has a good solid furniture of the period. The general effect is a substantial and heavily comfortable but not cosy and homelike [...]

At rise of curtain, the four Birling's and Gerald are seated at the table, with Arthur Birling at one end, his wife at the other, Eric downstage and Sheila and Gerald seated upstage. Edna, the parlourmaid, is just clearing the table, which has no cloth, of the dessert plates and champagne glasses etc., and then replacing them with decanter of port, cigar box and cigarettes. Port glasses are already on the table. All five are in evening dress of the period, the men in tails and white ties, not dinner-jackets. Arthur Birling is a heavy-looking, rather portentous man in this middle fifties with fairly easy manners but rather provincial in this speech. His wife is about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior. Sheila is a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited. Gerald Croft is an attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the well bred young man-about-town. Eric is in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive. At the moment they have all had a good dinner, are celebrating a special occasion, and are pleased with themselves.

### ACT ONE

**ARTHUR BIRLING:** Giving us the port, Edna? That's right. [*He pushes it towards Eric.*] You ought to like this port, Gerald, as a matter of fact, Finchley told me it's exactly the same port your father gets from him.

**GERALD CROFT:** Then it'll be all right. The governor prides himself on being a good judge of port. I don't pretend to know much about it.

**SHEILA BIRLING - *gaily, possessively*:** I should jolly well think not, Gerald, I'd hate you to know all about port - like one of these purple-faced old men.

**BIRLING:** Here, I'm not a purple-faced old man.

**SHEILA:** No. not yet. But then you don't know all about port - do you?

**BIRLING - *noticing that his wife has not taken any*:** Now then, Sybil, you must a take a little tonight. Special occasion, y'know, eh?

**SHEILA:** Yes, go on, mummy. You must drink our health.

**MRS BIRLING - *smiling*:** Very well, then. Just a little, thank you. [*To Edna, who is about to go, with tray*]: all right, Edna. I'll ring from the drawing room when we want coffee. Probably in about half an hour.

**EDNA - going:** Yes, ma'am. [*Edna goes out. They now have all the glasses filled. Birling beams*

*at them and clearly relaxes.]*

BIRLING: Well, well - this is very nice. Very nice. Good dinner too, Sybil. Tell cook from me.

GERALD - *politely*: Absolutely first class.

20 MRS BIRLING - *reproachfully*: Arthur, you're not supposed to say such things.

BIRLING: Oh - come come - I'm treating Gerald like one of the family. And I'm sure he won't object.

SHEILA - *with mocking aggressiveness*: Go on. Gerald - just you object!

25 GERALD - *smiling*: Wouldn't dream of it. In fact, I insist upon being one of the family now. I've been trying long enough, haven't I? [*as she does not reply, with more insistence*]: Haven't I? You know I have.

MRS BIRLING - *smiling*: Of course she does.

SHEILA - *half serious, half playful*: Yes - except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you.

30 GERALD: And I've told you - I was awfully busy at the works all that time.

SHEILA - *same tone as before*: Yes, that's what you say.

MRS BIRLING: Now, Sheila, don't tease him. When you're married you'll realize that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.

35 SHEILA: I don't believe I will. [*half playful, half serious, to Gerald*]: So you be careful.

GERALD: Oh - I will, I will. [*Eric suddenly guffaws. His parents look at him.*]

SHEILA - *severely*: Now - what's the joke?

ERIC: I don't know - really. Suddenly I felt I just had to laugh.

SHEILA: You're squiffy.

40 ERIC: I'm not.

MRS BIRLING: What an expression, Sheila! Really the things you girls pick up these days!

ERIC: If you think that's the best she can do.

SHEILA: Don't be an ass, Eric.

MRS BIRLING: Now stop it, you two. Arthur, what about this famous toast of yours?

45 BIRLING: Yes, of course. [*He clears his throat.*]: Well, Gerald, I know you agreed that we should only have this quiet little family party. It's a pity Sir George and - well - Lady Croft can't be with us, but they're abroad and so it can't be helped. As I told you, they sent me a very nice cable - couldn't be nicer. I'm not sorry that we're celebrating quietly like this.

MRS BIRLING: Much nicer really.

50 GERALD: I agree.

BIRLING: So do I, but it makes speech-making more difficult.

ERIC - *not too rudely*: Well. Don't do any. We'll drink their health and have done with it.

55 BIRLING: No, we won't. It's one of the happiest nights of my life. And one day, I hope, Eric, when you've a daughter of your own, you'll understand why. Gerald, I'm going to tell you frankly, without any pretences, that your engagement to Sheila means a tremendous lot to me. She'll make you happy, and I'm sure you'll make her happy. You're just the kind of son-in-law I always wanted. Your father and I have been friendly rivals in business for some time now - though Crofts limited are both older and bigger than Birling and Company - and now you've brought us together, and perhaps we may look forward to the time when Crofts and Birlings are no longer competing but are working together - for lower costs and higher prices.

GERALD: Hear, hear! And I think my father would agree to that.

MRS BIRLING: Now, Arthur, I don't think you ought to talk business on an occasion like this.

SHEILA: Neither do I. All wrong.

65 BIRLING: Quite so, I agree with you. I only mentioned it in passing. What I did want to say was - that Sheila's a lucky girl - and I think you're a pretty fortunate young man too, Gerald.

GERALD: I know I am - this once anyhow.

- BIRLING - *raising his glass*: So here's wishing the pair of you - the very best that life can bring. Gerald and Sheila.
- 70 MRS BIRLING- *raising her glass, smiling*: Yes, Gerald. Yes, Sheila darling. Our congratulations and very best wishes!
- GERALD: Thank you.
- MRS BIRLING: Eric!
- ERIC - *rather noisily*: All the best! She's got a nasty temper sometimes - but she's not bad
- 75 really. Good old Sheila!
- SHEILA: Chump! I cant drink to this, can I? When do I drink?
- GERALD: You can drink to me.
- SHEILA - *quite and serious now*: All right then. I drink to you, Gerald. [*For a moment they took at each other*]
- 80 GERALD - *quietly*: Thank you. And I drink to you - and hope I can make you as happy as you deserve to be.
- SHEILA - *trying to be light and easy*: You be careful - or I'll start weeping.
- GERALD - *smiling*: Well, perhaps this will help to stop it. [*He produces a ring case.*]
- SHEILA - *excited*: Oh - Gerald - you've got it - is it the one you wanted me to have?
- 85 GERALD - *giving the case to her*: Yes - the very one.
- SHEILA - *taking out the ring*: Oh - it's wonderful! Look - Mummy - isn't it a beauty? Oh darling. [*She kisses Gerald hastily.*]
- ERIC: Steady the buffs!
- SHEILA - *who has put the ring on, admiringly*: I think it's perfect. Now I really feel engaged.
- 90 MRS BIRLING: So you ought, darling. It's a lovely ring. Be careful with it.
- SHEILA: Careful! I'll never let it go out of my sight for an instant.
- MRS BIRLING - *smiling*: Well, it came just at the right moment. That was clever of you. Gerald. Now, Arthur, if you've no more to say, I think Sheila and I had better go into the drawing room and leave you men.
- 95 BIRLING - *rather heavily*: I just want to say this. [*Noticing that Sheila is still admiring her ring*]: Are you listening, Sheila? This concerns you too. And after all I don't often make speeches at you.
- SHEILA: I'm sorry, daddy. Actually I was listening. [*She looks attentive, as they all do. He holds them for a moment before continuing.*]
- 100 BIRLING: I'm delighted about this engagement and I hope it won't be too long before you're married. And I want to say this. There's a good deal of silly talk about these days - but - and I speak as a hard-headed business man, who has to take risks and know what he's about - I say, you can ignore all this silly pessimistic talk. When you marry, you'll be marrying at a very good time. Yes, a very good time - and soon it'll be an even better
- 105 time. Last month, just because the miners came out on strike, there's a lot of wild talk about possible labour trouble in the near future. Don't worry. We've passed the worst of it. We employers at last are coming together to see that our interests - and the interests of capital - are properly protected. And we're in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity.
- GERALD: I believe you're right, sir.
- 110 ERIC: What about war?
- BIRLING: Glad you mentioned it. Eric. I'm coming to that. Just because the kaiser makes a speech or two, or a few German officers have too much to drink and begin taking nonsense, you'll hear some people say that war's inevitable. And to that I say - fiddlesticks! The Germans don't want war. Nobody wants war, except some half-civilized folks in the
- 115 Balkans. And why? There's too much at stake these days. Everything to lose and nothing to gain by war.
- ERIC: Yes, I know - but still ...
- BIRLING: Just let me finish, Eric. You've a lot to learn yet. And I'm taking as a hard headed,

120 practical man of business. And I say there isn't a chance of war. The world's developing so  
fast that it'll make war impossible. Look at the progress we're making. In a year or two  
we'll have aeroplanes that will be able to go anywhere. And look at the way the auto-  
mobile's making headway - bigger and faster all the time. And then ships. Why, a friend of  
mine went over this new liner last week - the titanic - she sails next week - forty-six  
125 thousand eight hundred tons - new york in five days - and every luxury - and unsinkable,  
absolutely unsinkable. That's what you've got to keep your eye on, facts like that, progress  
like that - and not a few German officers taking nonsense and a few scaremongers here  
making a fuss about nothing. Now you three young people, just listen to this - and  
remember what I'm telling you now. In twenty or thirty year's time - let's say, in 1940 - you  
130 may be giving a little party like this - your son or daughter might be getting engaged - and  
I tell you, by that time you'll be living in a world that'll have forgotten all these capital  
versus labour agitations and all these silly little war scares. There'll be peace and  
prosperity and rapid progress everywhere - except of course in Russia, which will always  
be behindhand naturally.

135 **MRS BIRLING:** Arthur!

**BIRLING:** Yes, my dear, I know - I'm talking too much. But you youngsters just remember what  
I Said. We can't let these Bernard Shaws and H.G.Wellses do all the talking. We hard-  
headed practical business men must say something sometime. And we don't guess - we've  
had experience - and we know.

140 **MRS BIRLING - rising.** The others rise: Yes, of course, dear. Well don't keep Gerald in here too  
long. Eric - I want you a minute.

*[She and Sheila and Eric go out. Birling and Gerald sit down again.]*

**BIRLING:** Cigar?

**GERALD:** No, thanks. Can't really enjoy them.

145 **BIRLING - taking one himself:** Ah, you don't know what you're missing. I like a good cigar.  
*[Indicating the decanter]:* Help yourself.

**GERALD:** Thank you. *[Birling lights his cigar and Gerald, who had lit a cigarette, helps  
himself to port, then pushes the decanter to Birling.]*

**BIRLING:** Thanks. *[Confidentially]:* By the way, there's something I'd like to mention - in strict  
150 confidence - while we're by ourselves. I have an idea that your mother - Lady Croft -while  
she doesn't object to my girl - feels you might have done better for yourself socially ...  
*[Gerald, rather embarrassed, begins to murmur some dissent, but Birling checks him.]* No,  
Gerald, that's all right. Don't blame her. She comes from an old country family -landed  
people and so forth - and so it's only natural. But what I wanted to say is - there's a fair  
155 chance that I might find my way into the next honours list. Just a knighthood, of course.

**GERALD:** Oh - I say - congratulations!

**BIRLING:** Thanks, but it's a bit too early for that. So don't say anything. But I've had a hint or  
two. You see, I was lord mayor here two years ago when royalty visited us. And I've always  
been regarded as a sound useful party man. So - well - I gather there's a very good chance  
160 of a knighthood - so long as we behave ourselves, don't get into the police court or start a  
scandal - eh? *[Laughs complacently]*

**GERALD - laughs:** You seem to be a nice well-behaved family.

**BIRLING:** We think we are.

**GERALD:** So if that's the only obstacle, sir, I think you might as well accept my congratulations  
165 now.

**BIRLING:** No, no, I couldn't do that. And don't say anything yet.

**GERALD:** Not even to my mother? I know she'd be delighted.

**BIRLING:** Well, when she comes back, you might drop a hint to her. And you can promise her  
that we'll try to keep out of trouble during the next few months. *[They both laugh. Eric  
170 enters.]*

- ERIC: What's the joke? Started telling stories?
- BIRLING: No. want another glass of port?
- ERIC - *sitting down*: Yes, please. [*Takes decanter and helps himself.*] mother says we mustn't stay too long. But I don't think it matters. I left'em talking about clothes again. You'd think
- 175 a girl had never any clothes before she gets married. Women are potty about 'em.
- BIRLING: Yes, but you've got to remember, my boy, that clothes mean something quite different to a woman. Not just something to wear - and not only something to make 'em look prettier - but - well, a sort of sign or token of their self-respect.
- GERALD: That's true.
- 180 ERIC - *eagerly*: Yes, I remember. [*He checks himself.*]
- BIRLING: Well, what do you remember?
- ERIC - *confused*: Nothing.
- BIRLING: Nothing?
- GERALD - *amused*: Sounds a bit fishy to me.
- 185 BIRLING - *taking it in the same manner*: Yes, you don't know what some of these boys get up to nowadays. More money to spend and time to spare than I had when I was Eric's age. They worked us hard in those days and kept us short of cash. Thought even then - we broke out and had a bit of fun sometimes.
- GERALD: I'll bet you did.
- 190 BIRLING - *solemnly*: But this is the point. I don't want to lecture you two young fellows again. But what so many of you don't seem to understand now. when things are so much easier, is that a man has to make his own way - has to look after himself - and his family too, of course, when he has one - and so long as he does that he won't come to much harm. But the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after
- 195 everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense. But take my word for it, you youngsters - and I've learnt in the good hard school of experience - that a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own - and ... [*There is the sharp ring of a door bell. Birling stops to listen.*]
- ERIC: Somebody at the front door.
- 200 BIRLING: Edna'll answer it. Well, have another glass of port, Gerald - and then we'll join the ladies. That'll stop me giving you good advice.
- ERIC: Yes, you've piled it on a bit tonight, father.
- BIRLING: Special occasion. And feeling contented, for once. I wanted you to have the benefit of my experience. [*Edna enters.*]
- 205 EDNA: Please, sir, an Inspector's called.
- BIRLING: An inspector? What kind of inspector?
- EDNA: A police inspector. He says his name's Inspector Goole.
- BIRLING: Don't know him. Does he want to see me?
- EDNA: Yes, sir. He says it's important.
- 210 BIRLING: All right, Edna. Show him in here. Give us some more light. [*Edna does, then goes out.*] I'm still on the bench. It may be something about a warrant.
- GERALD - *lightly*: Sure to be. Unless Eric's been up to something ... [*nodding confidentially to Birling*] ... and that would be awkward, wouldn't it?
- BIRLING - *humorously*: Very.
- 215 ERIC - *who is uneasy, sharply*: Here, what do you mean?
- GERALD - *lightly*: Only something we were talking about when you were out. A joke really.
- ERIC - *still uneasy*: Well, I don't think it's very funny.
- BIRLING - *sharply, staring at him*: What's the matter with you?
- ERIC - *defiantly*: Nothing.
- 220 EDNA - *opening door, and announcing*: Inspector Goole.  
[*The inspector enters, and Edna goes, closing door after her. The inspector need not*

*be a big man but he creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit of the period. He speaks carefully, weightily, and has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking.]*

- 225 INSPECTOR: Mr Birling?  
BIRLING: Yes. Sit down inspector.  
INSPECTOR - *sitting*: Thank you, sir.  
BIRLING: Have a glass of port - or a little whisky?
- 230 INSPECTOR: No. thank you. Mr Birling. I'm on duty.  
BIRLING: You're new, aren't you?  
INSPECTOR: Yes, sir. Only recently transferred.  
BIRLING: I thought you must be. I was an alderman for years - and lord mayor two years ago - and I'm still on the bench - so I know the Brumley police officers pretty well - and I
- 235 thought I'd never seen you before.  
INSPECTOR: Quite so.  
BIRLING: Well, what can I do for you? Some trouble about a warrant? INSPECTOR: No, Mr Birling.  
BIRLING - *after a pause, with a touch of impatience*: Well, what is it then?  
INSPECTOR: I'd like some information, if you don't mind, Mr Birling. Two hours ago a young
- 240 woman died on the infirmary. She'd been taken there this afternoon because she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course.  
ERIC - *involuntarily*: My God!  
INSPECTOR: Yes, she was in great agony. They did everything they could for her at the infirmary, but she died. Suicide, of course.
- 245 BIRLING - *rather impatiently*: Yes, yes. Horrid business. But I don't understand why you should come here, inspector-  
INSPECTOR - *cutting through, massively*: I've been round to the room she had, and she'd left a letter there and a sort of diary. Like a lot of these young women who get into various kinds of trouble, she'd used more than one name. But her original name - her real name - was
- 250 Eva Smith.  
BIRLING - *thoughtfully*: Eva Smith?  
INSPECTOR: Do you remember her, Mr Birling?  
BIRLING - *slowly*: No - I seem to remember hearing that name - Eva Smith -somewhere. But it doesn't convey anything to me. And I don't see where I come into this.
- 255 INSPECTOR: She was employed in your works at one time.  
BIRLING: Oh - that's it, is it? Well, we've several hundred young women there, y'know, and they keep changing.  
INSPECTOR: This young women, Eva Smith, was out of the ordinary. I found a photograph of her in her lodgings. Perhaps you'd remember her from that.
- 260 *[The inspector takes a photograph, about postcard size, out of his pocket and goes to Birling. Both Gerald and Eric rise to have a look at the photograph, but the inspector interposes himself between them and the photograph. They are surprised and rather annoyed. Birling stares hard, and with recognition, at the photograph, which the inspector then replaces in his pocket.]*
- 265 GERALD - *showing annoyance*: Any particular reason why I shouldn't see this girl's photograph, Inspector?  
INSPECTOR - *coolly, looking hard at him*: There might be.  
ERIC: And the same applies to me, I suppose?  
INSPECTOR: Yes.
- 270 GERALD: I can't imagine what it could be.  
ERIC: Neither can I.  
BIRLING: And I must say, I agree with them, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: It's the way I like to go to work. One person and one line of inquiry at a time. Otherwise, there's a muddle.

275 BIRLING: I see. Sensible really. [*He moves restlessly, then turns.*] You've had enough of that port, Eric. [*The inspector is watching Birling and now Birling takes notice of him.*]

INSPECTOR: I think you remember Eva Smith now don't you, Mr Birling?

BIRLING: Yes, I do. She was one of my employees and then I discharged her.

ERIC: Is that why she committed suicide? When was this, father?

280 BIRLING: Just keep quiet, Eric, and don't get excited. This girl left us nearly two years ago. Let me see - it must have been in the early autumn of nineteen-ten.

INSPECTOR: Yes. End of September, nineteen-ten.

BIRLING: That's right.

GERALD: Look here, sir. Wouldn't you rather I was out of this?

285 BIRLING: I don't mind your being here, Gerald. And I'm sure you've no objection, have you, Inspector? Perhaps I ought to explain first that this is Mr Gerald Croft - the son of Sir George Croft - you know, Crofts limited.

INSPECTOR: Mr Gerald Croft, eh?

BIRLING: Yes. Incidentally we've been modestly celebrating his engagement to my daughter. 290 Sheila.

INSPECTOR: I see. Mr Croft is going to marry Miss Sheila Birling?

GERALD - *smiling*: I hope so.

INSPECTOR - *gravely*: Then I'd prefer you to stay.

GERALD - *surprised*: Oh - all right.

295 BIRLING - *somewhat impatiently*: Look - there's nothing mysterious - or scandalous about this business - at least not so far as I'm concerned. It's perfectly straightforward case, and as it happened more than eighteen months ago - nearly two years ago - obviously it has nothing whatever to do with the wretched girl's suicide. Eh, Inspector?

INSPECTOR: No, sir. I can't agree with you there.

300 BIRLING: Why not?

INSPECTOR: Because what happened to her then may have determined what happened to her afterwards, and what happened to her afterwards may have driven her to suicide. A chain of events.

BIRLING: Oh well - put like that, there's something in what you say. Still, I can't accept any 305 responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it?

INSPECTOR: Very awkward.

BIRLING: We'd all be in an impossible position, wouldn't we?

ERIC: By Jove, yes. And as you were saying, dad, a man has to look after himself-

310 BIRLING: Yes, well, we needn't go into all that.

INSPECTOR: Go into what?

BIRLING: Oh - just before you came - I'd been giving these young men a little good advice. Now - about this girl, Eva Smith. I remember her quite well now. She was a lively good-looking girl - country-bred, I fancy - and she'd been working in one of our machine shops for over a 315 year. A good worker too. In fact, the foreman there told me he was ready to promote her into what we call a leading operator - head of a small group of girls. But after they came back from their holidays that August, they were all rather restless, and they suddenly decided to ask for more money. They were averaging about twenty-two and six, which was neither more nor less than is paid generally in our industry. They wanted the rates raised 320 so that they could average about twenty-five shillings a week. I refused, of course.

INSPECTOR: Why?

BIRLING - *surprised*: Did you say 'why?' ?

INSPECTOR: Yes. Why did you refuse?

- BIRLING: Well, Inspector. I don't see that it's any concern of yours how I choose to run my  
325 business. Is it now?  
INSPECTOR: It might be, you know.  
BIRLING: I don't like that tone.  
INSPECTOR: I'm sorry. But you asked me a question.  
BIRLING: And you asked me a question before that, a quite unnecessary question too.  
330 INSPECTOR: It's my duty to ask questions.  
BIRLING: Well it's my duty to keep labour costs down. And if I'd agreed to this demand for a  
new rate we'd have added about twelve per cent to our labour costs. Does that satisfy you?  
So I refused. Said I couldn't consider it. We were paying the usual rates and if they didn't  
like those rates, they could go and work somewhere else. It's a free country, I told them.  
335 ERIC: It isn't if you can't go and work somewhere else. INSPECTOR: Quite so.  
BIRLING - *to Eric*: Look - just you keep out of this. You hadn't even started in the works when  
this happened. So they went on strike. That didn't last long, of course.  
GERALD: Not if it was just after the holidays. They'd be all broke - if I know them.  
BIRLING: Right, Gerald. They mostly were. And so was the strike, after a week or two. Pitiful  
340 affair. Well, we let them all come back - at the old rates - except the four or five ring-  
leaders, who'd started the trouble. I went down myself and told them to clear out. And  
this girl. Eva Smith, was one of them, she'd had a lot to say - far too much - so she had to  
go.  
GERALD: You couldn't have done anything else.  
345 ERIC: He could. He could have kept her on instead of throwing her out. I call it tough luck.  
BIRLING: Rubbish! If you don't comedown sharply on some of these people, they'd soon be  
asking for the earth.  
GERALD: I should say so!  
INSPECTOR: They might. But after all it's better to ask for the earth than to take it.  
350 BIRLING - *staring at THE INSPECTOR*: What did you say your name was, Inspector?  
INSPECTOR: Goole. G-double O-L-E.  
BIRLING: How do you get on with our chief constable, colonel Roberts?  
INSPECTOR: I don't see much of him.  
BIRLING: Perhaps I ought to warn you that he's an old friend of mine, and that I see him fairly  
355 frequently. We play golf together sometimes up at the west Brumley.  
INSPECTOR - *dryly*: I don't play golf.  
BIRLING: I didn't suppose you did.  
ERIC - *bursting out*: Well, I think it's a dam' shame.  
INSPECTOR: No, I've never wanted to play.  
360 ERIC: No, I mean about this girl - Eva Smith. Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? We try  
for the highest possible prices. And I don't see why she should have been sacked just  
because she'd a bit more spirit than the others. You said yourself she was a good worker.  
I'd have let her stay.  
BIRLING - *rather angrily*: Unless you brighten your ideas, you'll never be in a position to let  
365 anybody stay or to tell anybody to go. It's about time you learnt to face a few  
responsibilities. That's something this public-school-and-varsity life you've had doesn't  
seem to teach you.  
ERIC - *sulkily*: Well, we don't need to tell THE INSPECTOR all about that, do we?  
BIRLING: I don't see we need to tell the inspector anything more. In fact, there's nothing I can  
370 tell him. I told the girl to clear out, and she went. That's the last I heard of her. Have you  
any idea what happened to her after that? Get into trouble? Go on the streets?  
INSPECTOR - *rather slowly*: No, she didn't exactly go on the streets. [*Sheila has now entered.*]  
SHEILA - *gaily*: What's this about streets? [*Noticing THE INSPECTOR.*]: Oh - sorry. I didn't know.  
Mummy sent me in to ask you why you didn't come along to the drawing-room.



- 375 BIRLING: We shall be along in a minute now. Just finishing.  
INSPECTOR: I'm afraid not.  
BIRLING - *abruptly*: There's nothing else, I know. I've just told you that.  
SHEILA: What's all this about?  
BIRLING: Nothing to do with you. Sheila. Run along.
- 380 INSPECTOR: No, wait a minute, Miss Birling.  
BIRLING - *angrily*: Look here, Inspector, I consider this uncalled-for and officious. I've half a mind to report you. I've told you all I know - and it doesn't seem to me very important - and now there isn't the slightest reason why my daughter should be dragged into this unpleasant business.
- 385 SHEILA - *coming father in*: What business? What's happening?  
INSPECTOR - *impressively*: I'm a police inspector, Miss Birling. This afternoon a young woman drank some disinfectant, and died, after several hours of agony, tonight in the infirmary.  
SHEILA: Oh - how horrible! Was it an accident?  
INSPECTOR: No. she wanted to end her life. She felt she couldn't go on any longer.
- 390 BIRLING: Well, don't tell me that's because I discharged her from my employment nearly two years ago.  
ERIC: That might have started it.  
SHEILA: Did you, dad?  
BIRLING: Yes. The girl had been causing trouble in the works. I was quite justified.
- 395 GERALD: Yes, I think you were. I know we'd have done the same thing. Don't look like that Sheila.  
SHEILA - *rather distressed*: Sorry! It's just that I can't help thinking about this girl - destroying herself so horribly - and I've been so happy tonight. Oh, I wish you hadn't told me. What was she like? Quite young?
- 400 INSPECTOR: Yes. Twenty-four.  
SHEILA: Pretty?  
INSPECTOR: She wasn't pretty when I saw her today, but she had been pretty - very pretty.  
BIRLING: That's enough of that.  
GERALD: And I don't really see that this inquiry gets you anywhere, inspector. It's what
- 405 happened to her since she left Mr Birling's works that is important.  
BIRLING: Obviously. I suggested that sometime ago.  
GERALD: And we can't help you there because we don't know.  
INSPECTOR - *slowly*: Are you sure you don't know. [*He looks at Gerald, then at Eric, then at Sheila.*]
- 410 BIRLING: And are you suggesting now that one of them knows something about this girl?  
INSPECTOR: Yes.  
BIRLING: You didn't come here just to see me, then?  
INSPECTOR: No. [*The other four exchange bewildered and perturbed glances.*]
- 415 BIRLING - *with marked change of tone*: Well, of course, if I'd known that earlier, I wouldn't have called you officious and talked about reporting you. You understand that, don't you, Inspector? I thought that - for some reason best known to yourself - you were making the most of this tiny bit of information I could give you. I'm sorry. This makes a difference. You sure of your facts?  
INSPECTOR: Some of them - yes.
- 420 BIRLING: I can't think they can be of any great consequence.  
INSPECTOR: The girl's dead though.  
SHEILA: What do you mean by saying that? You talk as if we were responsible.  
BIRLING - *cutting in*: Just a minute, Sheila. Now, Inspector, perhaps you and I had better go and talk this over quietly in a corner-
- 425 SHEILA - *cutting in*: Why should you? He's finished with you. He says it's one of us now.

BIRLING: Yes, and I'm trying to settle it sensibly for you.

GERALD: Well, there's nothing to settle as far as I'm concerned. I've never known an Eva Smith.

ERIC: Neither have I.

430 SHEILA: Was that her name? Eva Smith?

GERALD: Yes.

SHEILA: Never heard it before.

GERALD: So were are you now, Inspector?

435 INSPECTOR: Where I was before, Mr. Croft. I told you - that like a lot of these young women, she'd used more than one name. She was still Eva Smith when Mr Birling sacked her - for wanting twenty-five shillings a week instead of twenty-two and six. But after that she stopped being Eva Smith. Perhaps she'd had enough of it.

ERIC: Can't blame her.

SHEILA - *to Birling*: I think it was a mean thing to do. Perhaps that spoilt everything for her.

440 BIRLING: Rubbish! [*To the inspector:*] Do you know what happened to this girl after she left my works?

INSPECTOR: Yes. She was out of work for the next two months. Both her parents were dead, so that she'd no home to go back to. And she hadn't been able to save much out of what Birling and Company had paid her. So that after two months, with no work, no money

445 coming in. and living in lodgings, with no relatives to help her, few friends, lonely, half-starved, she was feeling desperate.

SHEILA - *warmly*: I should think so. It's a rotten shame.

INSPECTOR: There are a lot of young women living that sort of existence in every city and big town in this country, miss Birling. If there weren't, the factories and warehouses wouldn't

450 know were to look for cheap labour. Ask your father.

SHEILA: But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people.

INSPECTOR - *dryly*: I've had that notion myself from time to time. In fact, I've thought that it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms.

455 SHEILA: Yes, I expect it would. But what happened to her then?

INSPECTOR: She had what seemed to her a wonderful stroke of luck. She was taken on in a shop - and a good shop too - Milwards.

SHEILA: Milwards! We go there - in fact, I was there this afternoon ... [*archly to Gerald*] ... for your benefit.

460 GERALD - *smiling*: Good!

SHEILA: Yes, she was a lucky to get taken on at Milwards.

INSPECTOR: That's what she thought. And it happened that at the beginning of December that year - nineteen-ten - there was a good deal of influenza about and Milwards suddenly found themselves short handed. So that gave her a chance. It seems she liked working

465 there. It was nice change from a factory. She enjoyed being among pretty clothes, I've no doubt. And now she felt she was making a good fresh start. You can imagine how she felt.

SHEILA: Yes, of course.

BIRLING: And then she got herself into trouble there, I suppose?

INSPECTOR: After about a couple of months, just when she felt she was settling down nicely,

470 they told her she'd have to go.

BIRLING: Not doing her work properly?

INSPECTOR: There was nothing wrong with the way she was doing her work. They admitted that.

BIRLING: There must have been something wrong.

475 INSPECTOR: All she knew was - that a customer complained about her - and so she had to go.

SHEILA - *staring at him, agitated*: When was this?

INSPECTOR - *impressively*: At the end of January - last year.

SHEILA: What - what did this girl look like?

INSPECTOR: If you'll come over here, I'll show you.

480 *[He moves nearer a light - perhaps standard lamp- and she crosses to him. He produces the photograph. She looks at it closely, recognizes it with a little cry, gives a half-stifled sob, and then runs out. The inspector puts the photograph back in his pocket and stares speculatively after her. The other three stare in amazement for a moment.]*

BIRLING: What's the matter with her?

485 ERIC: She recognized her from the photograph, didn't she?

INSPECTOR: Yes.

BIRLING - *angrily*: Why the devil do you want to go upsetting the child like that?

INSPECTOR: I didn't do it. She's upsetting herself.

BIRLING: Well - why - why?

490 INSPECTOR: I don't know - yet. That's something I have to find out.

BIRLING - *still angrily*: Well - if you don't mind - I'll find out first.

GERALD: Shall I go after her.

BIRLING - *moving*: No. leave this to me. I must also have a word with my wife - tell her what's happening. *[He turns at the door, staring at the inspector angrily.]* We were having a nice family celebration tonight. And a nasty mess you've made of it now, haven't you?

495 INSPECTOR - *steadily*: That's more or less what I was thinking earlier tonight when I was in the infirmary looking at what was left of Eva Smith. A nice little promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it.

500 *[Birling looks as if about to make some retort, then thinks better of it, and goes out, closing door sharply behind him. Gerald and Eric exchange uneasy glances. THE INSPECTOR ignores them.]*

GERALD: I'd like to have a look at that photograph now, inspector.

INSPECTOR: All in good time.

GERALD: I don't see why ...

505 INSPECTOR - *cutting in, massively*: You heard what I said before, M Croft. One line of inquiry at a time. Otherwise we'll all be taking at once and won't know where we are. If you've anything to tell me. you'll have an opportunity of doing it soon.

GERALD - *rather uneasily*: Well, I don't suppose I have ...

510 ERIC - *suddenly bursting out*: I'm sorry - but you see - we were having a little party -and I've had a few drinks, including rather a lot of champagne - and I've got a headache -and as I'm only in the way here - I think I'd better turn in.

INSPECTOR: And I think you'd better stay here.

ERIC: Why should I?

INSPECTOR: It might be less trouble. If you turn in, you might have to turn out again soon.

515 GERALD: Getting a bit heavy-handed, aren't you, inspector?

INSPECTOR: Possibly. But if you're easy with me, I'm easy with you.

GERALD: After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals.

INSPECTOR: Sometimes there isn't much difference as you think. Often, if it was left to me, I wouldn't know where to draw the line.

520 GERALD: Fortunately, it isn't left to you, is it?

INSPECTOR: No, it isn't. But some things are left to me. Inquiries of this sort, for instance.

*[Enter Sheila, who looks as if she's been crying.]* Well, Miss Birling?

SHEILA - *coming in and closing the door*: You knew it was me all the time, didn't you?

INSPECTOR: I had an idea it might be - from something the girl herself wrote.

525 SHEILA: I've told my father - he didn't seem to think it amounted to much - but I felt rotten about it at the time and now I feel a lot worse. Did it make much difference to her?

INSPECTOR: Yes, I'm afraid it did. It was the last real steady job she had. When she lost it - for

no reason that she could discover - she decided she might as well try another kind of life.

SHEILA - *miserably*: So I'm really responsible?

530 INSPECTOR: No, not entirely. A good deal happened to her after that. But you're partly to blame. Just as your father is.

ERIC: But what did Sheila do?

SHEILA - *distressed*: I went to the manager at Milwards and I told him that if they didn't get rid of that girl, I'd never go near the place again and I'd persuade mother to close our  
535 account with them.

INSPECTOR: And why did you do that?

SHEILA: Because I was in a furious temper.

INSPECTOR: And what had this girl done to make you lose your temper.

540 SHEILA: When I was looking at myself in the mirror I caught sight of her smiling at the assistant, and I was furious with her. I'd been in a bad temper anyhow.

INSPECTOR: And was it the girls fault?

SHEILA: No, not really. It was my own fault. [*suddenly, to Gerald:*] All right, Gerald, you needn't look at me like that. At least, I'm trying to tell the truth. I expect you've done things you're ashamed of too.

545 GERALD - *surprised*: Well. I never said I hadn't. I don't see why ...

INSPECTOR - *cutting in*: Never mind about that. You can settle that between you afterwards. [*to Sheila:*] What happened?

550 SHEILA: I'd gone in to try something on. It was an idea of my own - mother had been against it, and so had the assistant - but I insisted. As soon as I tried it on, I knew they'd been right. It just didn't suit me at all. I looked silly in the thing. Well, this girl had brought the dress up from the workroom, and when the assistant- miss Francis- had asked her something about it, this girl, to show us what she meant, had held the dress up, as if she was wearing it. And it just suited her. She was the right type for it, just as I was the wrong type. She was very pretty too - with big dark eyes - and that didn't make it any better.  
555 Well, when I tried the thing on and looked at myself and knew that it was all wrong, I caught sight of this girl smiling at miss Francis - as if to say: 'doesn't she look awful' - and I was absolutely furious. I was very rude to both of them, and then I went to the manager and told him that this girl had been very impertinent - and - and - [*She almost breaks down and only just controls herself.*] How could I know what would happen afterwards? If  
560 she'd been some miserable plain little creature, I don't suppose I'd have done it. But she was very pretty and looked as if she could take care of herself. I couldn't be sorry for her.

INSPECTOR: In fact, in a kind of way, you might be said to have been jealous of her.

SHEILA: Yes, I suppose so.

565 INSPECTOR: And so you used the power you had, as a daughter of a good customer and also of a man well known in the town, to punish the girl just because she made you feel like that?

SHEILA: Yes, but it didn't seem to be anything very terrible at the time. Don't you understand? And if I could help her now, I would ...

INSPECTOR - *harshly*: Yes, but you can't. It's too late. She's dead.

ERIC: My God, it's a bit thick, when you *come* to think of it ...

570 SHEILA - *stormily*: Oh shut up, Eric. I know! I know! It's the only time I've ever done anything like that, and I'll never, never do it again to anybody. I've noticed them giving me a sort of look sometimes at Milwards - I noticed it even this afternoon - and I suppose some of them remember. I feel now I can never go there again. Oh - why had this to happen?

575 INSPECTOR - *sternly*: That's what I asked myself tonight when I was looking at that dead girl. And then I said to myself: 'Well, we'll try to understand why it had to happen?' and that's why I'm here, and why I'm, not going until I know all that happened. Eva Smith lost her job with Birling and Company because the strike failed and they were determined not to have another one. At last she found another job - under what name I don't know - in a big shop,

and had to leave there because you were annoyed with yourself and passed the annoyance  
580 on to her. Now she had to try something else. So first she changed her name to Daisy  
Renton ...

GERALD - *startled*: What?

INSPECTOR - *steadily*: I said she changed her name to Daisy Renton.

GERALD - *pulling himself together*: D'you mind if I give myself a drink, Sheila?

585 *[Sheila merely nods, still staring at him, and he goes across to the tantalus on the  
sideboard for a whisky.]*

INSPECTOR: Where is your father, Miss Birling?

SHEILA: He went into the drawing room, to tell mother what was happening here. Eric, take  
the inspector along to the drawing-room. *[Eric leaves with the inspector.]* Well, Gerald?

590 GERALD - *trying to smile*: Well what, Sheila?

SHEILA: How did you come to know this girl - Eva Smith?

GERALD: I didn't.

SHEILA: Daisy Renton then - it's the same thing.

GERALD: Why should I have to know her?

595 SHEILA: Oh don't be stupid. We haven't much time. You gave yourself away as soon as he  
mentioned her other name.

GERALD: All right. I knew her. Let's leave it at that.

SHEILA: We can't leave it at that.

GERALD - *approaching her*: Now listen, darling ...

600 SHEILA: No, that's no use. You not only knew her but you knew her very well. Otherwise, you  
wouldn't look so guilty about it. When did you first get to know her? *[He does not reply.]*  
Was it after she left Milwards? When she changed her name, as he said, and began to lead  
a different sort of life? Were you seeing her last spring and summer, during that time you  
hardly came near me and said you were so busy? Were you? *[Gerald does not reply but  
605 looks at her.]* Yes, of course you were.

GERALD: I'm sorry. Sheila. But it was all over and done with, last summer. I hadn't set eyes on  
the girl for at least six months. I don't come into this suicide business.

SHEILA: I thought I didn't half an hour ago.

610 GERALD: You don't. Neither of us does. So - for God's sake - don't say anything to the  
inspector.

SHEILA: About you and this girl?

GERALD: Yes. We can keep it from him.

SHEILA - *laughs rather hysterically*: Why - you fool - he knows. Of course he knows. And I hate  
to think how much he knows that we don't know yet. You'll see. You'll see.

615 *[She looks at him almost in triumph. He looks crushed. The doors slowly opens and  
the inspector appears, looking steadily and searchingly at them.]*

INSPECTOR: Well?

END OF ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

INSPECTOR - *to Gerald*: Well?

SHEILA - *hysterical laugh, to Gerald*: You see? What did I tell you?

620 INSPECTOR: What did you tell him?

GERALD - *with an effort*: Inspector, I think Miss Birling ought to be excused any more of this questioning. She'd nothing more to tell you. She's had a long exciting and tiring day - we were celebrating our engagement, you know - and now she's obviously had about as much as she can stand. You heard her.

625 SHEILA: He means that I'm getting hysterical now.

INSPECTOR: And are you?

SHEILA: Probably.

INSPECTOR: Well. I don't want to keep you here. I've no more questions to ask you.

SHEILA: No, but you haven't finished asking questions - have you?

630 INSPECTOR: No.

SHEILA - *to Gerald*: You see? [*To the inspector*] Then I'm staying.

GERALD: Why should you? It's bound to be unpleasant and disturbing.

INSPECTOR: And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?

635 GERALD: If possible - yes.

INSPECTOR: Well, we know one young woman who wasn't. Don't we?

GERALD: I suppose I asked for that.

SHEILA: be careful you don't ask for more, Gerald.

GERALD: I only meant to say to you - why stay when you'll hate it?

640 SHEILA: It can't be any worse for me than it has been. And it might be better.

GERALD - *bitterly*: I see.

SHEILA: What do you see?

GERALD: You've been through it-and now you want to see somebody else put through it.

SHEILA - *bitterly*: so that's what you think I'm like. I'm glad I realized it in time, Gerald.

645 GERALD: No, no, I didn't mean ...

SHEILA - *cutting in*: Yes, you did. And if you'd really loved me, you couldn't have said that. You listened to that nice story about me. I got that girl sacked from Milwards. And now you've made up your mind I must obviously be a selfish, vindictive creature.

GERALD: I neither said that nor even suggested it.

650 SHEILA: Then why say I want to see somebody else put through it? That's not what I mean at all.

GERALD: All right then, I'm sorry.

SHEILA: Yes, but you don't believe me. And this is just the wrong time not to believe me.

655 INSPECTOR - *massively taking charge*: Allow me, Miss Birling. [*To Gerald*] I can tell you why Miss Birling wants to stay on and why she says it might be better for her if she did. A girl died tonight. A pretty, lively sort of girl, who never did anybody any harm. But she died in misery and agony - hating life.

SHEILA - *distressed*: Don't please - I know, I know - and I can't stop thinking about it.

660 INSPECTOR - *ignoring this*: Now, Miss Birling has just been made to understand what she did to this girl. She feels responsible. And if she leaves us now, and doesn't hear any more, then she'll feel she's entirely to blame, she'll be alone with her responsibility, the rest of tonight, all tomorrow, all the next night.

SHEILA - *eagerly*: Yes, that's it. And I know I'm to blame ... and I'm desperately sorry ... but I can't believe - I won't believe - it's simply my fault that in the end she ... she committed suicide. That would be too horrible.

665

INSPECTOR - *sternly to them both*: You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt.

SHEILA - *staring at him*: Yes. That's true. You know. [*He goes close to him, wonderingly:*] I don't understand about you.

670 INSPECTOR - *calmly*: There's no reason why you should.

[*He regards her calmly while she stares at him wonderingly and dubiously. Now Mrs Birling enters, briskly and self-confidently, quite out of key with the little scene that has just passed. Sheila feels this at once.*]

MRS BIRLING - *smiling*: Good evening, Inspector.

675 INSPECTOR: good evening, Madam.

MRS BIRLING - *same easy tone*: I'm Mrs Birling, y'know. My husband has just explained why you're here, and while we'll be glad to tell you anything you want to know, I don't think we can help you much.

SHEILA: No. Mother, please!

680 MRS BIRLING - *affecting great surprise*: What's the matter, Sheila?

SHEILA - *hesitantly*: I know it sounds silly.

MRS BIRLING: What does?

SHEILA: You see, I feel you're beginning all wrong. And I'm afraid you'll say or do something that you'll be sorry for afterwards.

685 MRS BIRLING: I don't know what you're talking about, Sheila.

SHEILA: We all started like that - so confident, so pleased with ourselves until he began asking us questions.

[*Mrs Birling looks from Sheila to the inspector.*]

MRS BIRLING: You seem to have made a great impression on this child, Inspector.

690 INSPECTOR - *coolly*: we often do on the young ones. They're more impressionable.

[*He and Mrs Birling look at each other for a moment. Then Mrs Birling turns to Sheila again.*]

MRS BIRLING: You're looking tired, dear. I think you ought to go to bed - and forget about this absurd business. You'll feel better in the morning.

SHEILA: Mother, I couldn't possibly go. Nothing could be worse for me. We've settled all that.

695 I'm staying here until I know why that girl killed herself.

MRS BIRLING: Nothing but morbid curiosity.

SHEILA: No it isn't.

MRS BIRLING: Please don't contradict me like that. And in any case I don't suppose for a moment that we can understand why the girl committed suicide. Girls of that class ...

700 SHEILA - *urgently cutting in*: Mother, don't - please don't. For your own sake, as well as ours, you mustn't ...

MRS BIRLING - *annoyed*: Mustn't what? Really, Sheila!

SHEILA - *slowly*: Carefully now. You mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the inspector will just break it down. And it'll be all the worse when he does.

705 MRS BIRLING: I don't understand you. [*To the inspector*] Do you?

INSPECTOR: Yes. And she's right.

MRS BIRLING - *haughtily*: I beg your pardon!

INSPECTOR - *very plainly*: I said yes - I do understand her. And she's right.

710 MRS BIRLING: That, I consider, is a trifle impertinent, inspector. [*Sheila gives a short hysterical laugh.*] Now, what is it, Sheila?

SHEILA: I don't know. Perhaps it's because impertinent is such a silly word.

MRS BIRLING: In any case ...

SHEILA: But, Mother, do stop before it's too late.

715 MRS BIRLING: If you mean that the inspector will take offence ...

INSPECTOR - *cutting in calmly*: No, no. I never take offence.

MRS BIRLING: I'm glad to hear it. Though I must add that it seems to me that we have more reason for taking offence.

INSPECTOR: Let's leave offence out of it, shall we?

720 GERALD: I think we'd better.

SHEILA: So do I.

MRS BIRLING - *REBUKING them*: I'm talking to the inspector now, if you don't mind. [*To the inspector rather grandly*] I realize that you may have to conduct some sort of inquiry, but I must say that so far you seem to be conducting in a rather peculiar and offensive manner.

725 You know of course that my husband was lord mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate-

GERALD - *cutting, rather impatiently*: Mrs Birling, the inspector knows all that. And I don't think it's a very good idea to remind him-

SHEILA - *cutting in*: It's crazy. Stop it, please, Mother.

730 INSPECTOR - *imperturbable*: Yes. Now what about Mr Billing?

MRS BIRLING: He's coming back in a moment. He's just talking to my son, Eric, who seems to be in an excitable silly mood.

INSPECTOR: What's the matter with him?

735 MRS BIRLING: Eric? Oh, I'm afraid he may have had rather too much to drink tonight. We were having a little celebration here ...

INSPECTOR - *cutting in*: Isn't he used to drinking?

MRS BIRLING: No. of course not. He's only a boy.

INSPECTOR: No, he's a young man. And some young men drink far too much.

SHEILA: And Eric's one of them.

740 MRS BIRLING - *very sharply*: Sheila!

SHEILA *urgently*: I don't want to get poor Eric into trouble. He's probably in enough trouble already. But we really must stop these silly pretences. This isn't the time to pretend that Eric isn't used to drink. He's been steadily drinking too much for the last two years.

745 MRS BIRLING - *staggered*: It isn't true. You know him, Gerald, and you're a man, you must know it isn't true.

INSPECTOR - *as Gerald hesitates*: Well, Mr Croft?

GERALD - *apologetically to Mrs Birling*: I'm afraid it is, y'know. Actually I've never seen much of him outside this house, but, well, I have gathered that he does drink pretty hard.

MRS BIRLING - *bitterly*: And this is the time you choose to tell me.

750 SHEILA: Yes, of course it is. That's what I meant when I talked about building up a wall that's sure to be knocked flat. It makes it all harder to bear.

MRS BIRLING: But it's you - and not the inspector here - who's doing it.

SHEILA: Yes, but don't you see? He hasn't started on you yet.

755 MRS BIRLING - *after a pause, recovering herself*: If necessary I shall be glad to answer any questions the inspector wishes to ask me. Though naturally I don't know anything about this girl.

INSPECTOR - *gravely*: We'll see, Mrs Birling.

[*Birling enters, closing door behind him.*]

760 BIRLING - *rather hot and bothered*: I've been trying to persuade Eric to go to bed, but he won't. Now he says you told him to stay up. Did you?

INSPECTOR: Yes, I did.

BIRLING: Why?

INSPECTOR: Because I shall want to talk to him, Mr Birling.

765 BIRLING: I can't see why you should, but if you must, then I suggest you do it now. Have him in and get it over, then let the lad go.

INSPECTOR: No, I can't do that yet. I'm sorry, but he'll have to wait.

BIRLING: Now look here, Inspector.



INSPECTOR - *cutting in with authority*: He must wait his turn.

SHEILA - *to Mrs Birling*: You see?

770 MRS BIRLING: no, I don't. And please be quiet, Sheila.

BIRLING - *angrily*: Inspector, I've told you before, I don't like the tone nor the way you're handling this inquiry. And I don't propose to give you much rope.

INSPECTOR: You needn't give me any rope.

SHEILA - *rather wildly, with laugh*: No, he's giving us the rope - so that we'll hang ourselves.

775 BIRLING - *to Mrs Birling*: What's the matter with that child?

MRS BIRLING: Over-excited. And she refuses to go. [*With sudden anger to the inspector*] Well, come along. What is it you want to know?

INSPECTOR - *coolly*: At the end of January, last year, this girl Eva Smith had to leave Milwards because Miss Birling compelled them to discharge her, and then she stopped being Eva Smith, looking for a job, and became Daisy Renton, with other ideas. [*He sharply turns on Gerald:*] Mr Croft, when did you first get to know her?

780 [There is an exclamation of surprise from Birling and Mrs Birling.]

GERALD: Where did you get the idea that I did know her?

SHEILA: It's no use, Gerald. You're wasting time.

785 Inspector: As soon as I mentioned the name Daisy Renton, it was obvious you'd known her. You gave yourself away at once.

SHEILA - *bitterly*: Of course he did.

INSPECTOR: And anyhow I knew already. When and where did you first meet her?

790 GERALD: All right, if you must have it. I met her first, sometime in march last year, in the stalls bar at the palace. I mean the palace music hall here in Brumley.

SHEILA: Well, we didn't think you meant Buckingham Palace.

GERALD - *to Sheila*: Thanks. You're going to be a great help, I can see. You've said your piece, and you're obviously going to hate this, so why on earth don't you leave us to it?

795 SHEILA: Nothing would induce me. I want to understand exactly what happens when a man says he's so busy at the works that he can hardly ever find time to come and see the girl he's supposed to be in love with. I wouldn't miss it for worlds.

INSPECTOR - *with authority*: Yes, Mr Croft, in the Stalls Bar at the Palace Variety Theatre ...

GERALD: I happened to look in, one night, after a long dull day, and as the show wasn't very bright, I went down into the bar for a drink. It's a favourite haunt of women of the town.

800 MRS BIRLING: Women of the town?

BIRLING: Yes, yes. But I see no point in mentioning the subject.

MRS BIRLING: It would be much better if Sheila didn't listen to this story at all.

SHEILA: But you're forgetting I'm supposed to be engaged to the hero of it. Go on, Gerald. You went down into the bar, which is a favourite haunt of the women of the town.

805 GERALD: I'm glad I amuse you.

INSPECTOR - *sharply*: Come along, Mr Croft. What happened?

GERALD: I didn't propose to stay long down there. I hate those hard-eyed dough-faced women. But then I noticed a girl who looked quite different. She was very pretty. Soft brown hair and big dark eyes ... [*He breaks off:*] My God!

810 INSPECTOR: What's the matter?

GERALD - *distressed*: Sorry ... I ... well, I've suddenly realized ... taken it in properly that she's dead.

INSPECTOR - *harshly*: Yes, she's dead.

SHEILA: And probably between us we killed her.

815 MRS BIRLING - *sharply*: Sheila, don't talk nonsense.

SHEILA: You wait, Mother.

INSPECTOR - *to Gerald*: Go on.

GERALD: She looked young and fresh and charming and altogether out of place down here.

And obviously she wasn't enjoying herself. Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed,  
820 had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his.

**MRS BIRLING - *cutting in*:** there's no need to be disgusting. And surely you don't mean Alderman Meggarty?

**GERALD:** of course I do. He's a notorious womanizer as well as being one of the worst sots and rogues in Brumley.

825 **INSPECTOR:** Quite right.

**MRS BIRLING - *staggered*:** Well, really! Alderman Meggarty! I must say, we are learning something tonight.

**SHEILA - *coolly*:** Of course we are. But everybody knows about that horrible old Meggarty. A girl I know had to see him at the town hall one afternoon and she only escaped with a torn  
830 blouse.

**BIRLING - *sharply, shocked*:** Sheila!

**INSPECTOR - *to Gerald*:** Go on, please.

**GERALD:** The girl saw me looking at her and then gave me a glance that was nothing less than a cry for help. So I went across and told Joe Meggarty some nonsense: That the manager  
835 had a message for him or something like that - got him out of the way - and then told the girl that if she didn't want any more of that sort of thing, she'd better let me take her out of there. She agreed at once.

**INSPECTOR:** Where did you go?

**GERALD:** We went along to the county hotel which I knew would be quiet at that time of  
840 night, and we had a drink or two and talked.

**INSPECTOR:** Did she drink much at the time?

**GERALD:** No. She only had a port and lemonade - or some such concoction. All she wanted was to talk, a little friendliness, and I gathered that Joe Meggarty's advances had left her rather shaken - as well they might ...

845 **INSPECTOR:** She talked about herself?

**GERALD:** Yes. I asked her questions about herself. She told me her name was Daisy Renton, that she'd lost both parents, that she came originally from somewhere outside Brumley. She also told me she'd had a job in one of the works here and had had to leave after a strike. She said something about the shop too, but wouldn't say which it was, and she was  
850 deliberately vague about what happened. I couldn't get any exact details from her about herself - just because she felt I was interested and friendly - but at the same time she wanted to be Daisy Renton - and not Eva Smith.

In fact, I heard that name for the first time tonight. What she did let slip - though she didn't mean to - was that she was desperately hard up and at that moment was  
855 actually hungry. I made the people at the county find some food for her.

**INSPECTOR:** And then you decided to keep her - as your mistress?

**MRS BIRLING:** What?

**SHEILA:** Of course, Mother. It was obvious from the start. Go on, Gerald. Don't mind mother.

**GERALD - *steadily*:** I discovered, not that night but two nights later, when we met again - not  
860 accidentally this time of course - that in fact she didn't have a penny and was going to be turned out of the miserable back room she had. It happened that a friend of mine, Charlie Brunswick, had gone off to Canada for six months and had let me have the key of a nice little set of rooms he had - in Morgan Terrace - and had asked me to keep an eye on them for him and use them if I wanted to. So I insisted on Daisy's moving into those rooms and I  
865 made her take some money to keep her going there. [*Carefully to the inspector:*] I want you to understand that I didn't install her there so that I could make love to her. I made her go to Morgan Terrace because I was sorry for her, and didn't like the idea of her going back to the palace bar. I didn't ask for anything in return.

**INSPECTOR:** I see.

- 870 SHEILA: Yes, but why are you saying that to him? You ought to be saying it to me.  
GERALD: I suppose I ought really. I'm sorry, Sheila. Somehow I ...  
SHEILA - *cutting in, as he hesitates*: I know. Somehow he makes you.  
INSPECTOR: But she became your mistress?  
GERALD: Yes. I suppose it was inevitable. She was young and pretty and warm hearted ... and  
875 intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life, you understand?  
INSPECTOR: Yes. She was a woman. She was lonely. Were you in love with her?  
SHEILA: Just what I was going to ask!  
BIRLING - *angrily*: I really must protest.
- 880 INSPECTOR - *turning on him sharply*: Why should you do any protesting? It was you who turned the girl out in the first place.  
BIRLING - *rather taken aback*: Well, I only did what any employer might have done. And what I was in which my daughter, a young unmarried girl, is being dragged into this ...  
INSPECTOR - *sharply*: Your daughter isn't living on the moon. She's here in Brumley, too.
- 885 SHEILA: Yes, and it was I who had the girl turned out of her job at Milwards. And I'm supposed to be engaged to Gerald. And I'm not a child, don't forget. I've a right to know. Were you in love with her, Gerald?  
GERALD - *hesitatingly*: It's hard to say. I didn't feel about her as she felt about me.  
SHEILA - *with sharp sarcasm*: Of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must  
890 have adored it, Gerald.  
GERALD: All right: I did for a time. Nearly any man would have done.  
SHEILA: That's probably about the best thing you've said tonight. At least it's honest. Did you go and see her every night?  
GERALD: No. I wasn't telling you a complete lie when I said I'd been very busy at the works all  
895 that time. We were very busy. But of course I did see a good deal of her.  
MRS BIRLING: I don't think we want any further details of this disgusting affair.  
SHEILA - *cutting in*: I do. And anyhow, we haven't had any details yet.  
GERALD: and you're not going to have any. [*To Mrs Birling:*] You know, it wasn't disgusting.  
MRS BIRLING: It's disgusting to me.
- 900 SHEILA: Yes, but after all, you didn't come into this, did you, Mother?  
GERALD: Is there anything else you want to know ... that you ought to know?  
INSPECTOR: Yes. When did this affair end?  
GERALD: I can tell you exactly. It was the first week of September. I had to go away for several weeks then - on business - and by that time Daisy knew it was coming to an end. So  
905 I broke it off definitely before I went.  
INSPECTOR: How did she take it?  
GERALD: Better than I'd hoped. She was ... very gallant ... about it.  
SHEILA - *with irony*: That was nice for you.  
GERALD: No, it wasn't. [*He waits for a moment. Then in a low, troubled tone:*] She told me  
910 she'd been happier than she'd ever been before - but that she knew it couldn't last - hadn't expected it to last. She didn't blame me at all. I wish to God she had now. Perhaps I'd feel better about it.  
INSPECTOR: She had to move out of those rooms?  
GERALD: Yes, we'd agreed about that. She'd saved a little money during the summer - she'd  
915 lived very economically on what I'd allowed her - and didn't want to take more from me, but I insisted on a parting gift of enough money, though it wasn't so very much, to see her through to the end of the year.  
INSPECTOR: Did she tell you what she proposed to do after you'd left her?  
GERALD: No. she refused to talk about that. I got the idea, once or twice from what she said,  
920 that she thought of leaving Brumley. Whether she did or not - I don't know. Did she?

INSPECTOR: Yes. She went away for about two months. To some seaside place.

GERALD: By herself?

INSPECTOR: Yes. I think she went away - to be alone, to be quiet, to remember all that had happened between you.

925 GERALD: How do you know that?

INSPECTOR: She kept a rough sort of diary. And she said there that she had to go away and be quiet and remember just to make it last longer. She felt there'd never be anything as good again for her, so she had to make it last longer.

GERALD - *gravely*: I see. Well, I never saw her again, and that's all I can tell you.

930 INSPECTOR: It's all I want to know from you.

GERALD: In that case - as I'm rather more ... upset - by this business than I probably appear to be, and ... well, I'd like to be alone for a while. I'd be glad if you'd let me go.

INSPECTOR: Go were? Home?

GERALD: No. I'll just go out - walk about for a while, if you don't mind. I'll come back.

935 INSPECTOR: All right, Mr Croft.

SHEILA: But just in case you forget - or decide not to come back, Gerald, I think you'd better take this with you. [*She hands him the ring.*]

GERALD: I see. Well, I was expecting this.

940 SHEILA: I don't dislike you as I did half an hour ago, Gerald. In fact, in some odd way, I rather respect you more than I've ever done before. I knew anyhow you were lying about those months last year when you hardly came near me. I knew there was something fishy about that time. And now at least you've been honest. And I believe what you told us about the way you helped her at first. Just out of pity. And it was my fault really that she was so desperate when you first met her. But this has made a difference. You and I aren't the same people who sat down to dinner here. We'd have to start all over again, getting to know each other.

945 BIRLING: Now, Sheila, I'm not defending him. But you must understand that a lot of young men ...

SHEILA: Don't interfere, please, father. Gerald knows what I mean, and you apparently don't.

950 GERALD: Yes, I know what you mean. But I'm coming back - if I may.

SHEILA: All right.

MRS BIRLING: Well, really, I don't know. I think we've just about come to an end of this wretched business.

955 GERALD: I don't think so. Excuse me. [*He goes out. They watch him go in silence. We hear the front door slam.*]

SHEILA - *to inspector*: You know, you never showed him that photograph of her.

INSPECTOR: No. it wasn't necessary. And I thought it better not to.

MRS BIRLING: You have a photograph of this girl?

INSPECTOR: Yes. I think you'd better look at it.

960 MRS BIRLING: I don't see any particular reason why I should.

INSPECTOR: Probably not. But you'd better look at it.

MRS BIRLING: Very well. [*He produces the photograph and she looks hard at it.*]

INSPECTOR - *taking back the photograph*: You recognize her?

MRS BIRLING: No. why should I?

965 INSPECTOR: of course she might have changed lately, but I cant believe she could have changed so much.

MRS BIRLING: I don't understand you, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: You mean you don't choose to do, Mrs Birling.

MRS BIRLING - *angrily*: I meant what I said.

970 INSPECTOR: You're not telling me the truth.

MRS BIRLING: I beg your pardon!

- BIRLING - *angrily, to Inspector*: Look here, I'm not going to have this, Inspector. You'll apologize at once.
- INSPECTOR: Apologize for what - doing my duty?
- 975 BIRLING: No, for being so offensive about it. I'm a public man.
- INSPECTOR - *massively*: Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.
- BIRLING: Possibly. But you weren't asked to come here to talk to me about my responsibilities.
- SHEILA: Let's hope not. Though I'm beginning to wonder.
- MRS BIRLING: Does that mean anything, Sheila?
- 980 SHEILA: It means that we've no excuse now for putting on airs and that if we've any sense we won't try. Father threw this girl out because she asked for decent wages. I went and pushed her farther out, right into the street, just because I was angry and she was pretty. Gerald set her up as his mistress and then dropped her when it suited him. And now you're pretending you don't recognize her from that photograph. I admit I don't know why you
- 985 should, but I know jolly well you did in fact recognize her, from the way you looked. And if you're not telling the truth, why should the Inspector apologize? And can't you see, both of you, you're making it worse? [*She turns away. The front door slams again.*]
- BIRLING: That was the door again.
- MRS BIRLING: Gerald must have come back.
- 990 INSPECTOR: Unless your son has just gone out.
- BIRLING: I'll see. [*He goes out quickly. Inspector turns to Mrs Birling.*]
- INSPECTOR: Mrs Birling, you're a member - a prominent member - of the Brumley Women's Charity Organization, aren't you? [*Mrs Birling does not reply.*]
- SHEILA: Go on, mother. You might as well admit it. [*To the inspector:*] Yes, she did. Why?
- 995 INSPECTOR - *calmly*: It's an organization to which women in distress can appeal for help in various forms. Isn't that so?
- MRS BIRLING - *with dignity*: Yes. We've done a great deal of useful work in helping deserving cases.
- INSPECTOR: There was a meeting of the interviewing committee two weeks ago?
- 1000 MRS BIRLING: I dare say there was.
- INSPECTOR: You know very well there was, Mrs Birling. You were in the chair.
- MRS BIRLING: And if I was, what business is it of yours?
- INSPECTOR - *severely*: Do you want me to tell you - in plain words? [*Enter Birling, looking rather agitated.*]
- 1005 BIRLING: That must have been Eric.
- MRS BIRLING - *alarmed*: Have you been up to his room?
- BIRLING: Yes. And I called out on both landings. It must have been Eric we heard go out then.
- MRS BIRLING: Silly boy! Where can he have gone to?
- BIRLING: I can't imagine. But he was in one of his excitable queer moods, and even though we
- 1010 don't need him here.
- INSPECTOR - *cutting in. sharply*: We do need him here. And if he's not back soon, I shall have to go and find him.
- [*Birling and Mrs Birling exchange bewildered and rather frightened glances.*]
- SHEILA: He's probably just gone to cool off. He'll be back soon.
- 1015 INSPECTOR - *severely*: I hope so.
- MRS BIRLING: And why should you hope so?
- INSPECTOR: I'll explain why when you've answered my questions, Mrs Birling.
- BIRLING: Is there any reason why my wife should answer questions from you, Inspector?
- INSPECTOR: Yes, a very good reason. You'll remember that Mr Croft told us - quite truthfully, I
- 1020 believe - that he hadn't spoken to or seen Eva Smith since last September. But Mrs Birling spoke to and saw her only two weeks ago.
- SHEILA - *astonished*: Mother!

- BIRLING:** Is this true?
- MRS BIRLING - *after a pause*:** Yes, quite true.
- 1025 **INSPECTOR:** She appealed to your organization for help?
- MRS BIRLING:** Yes.
- INSPECTOR:** Not as Eva Smith?
- Mrs Birling: No, nor as Daisy Renton.
- INSPECTOR:** As what then?
- 1030 **MRS BIRLING:** First, she called herself Mrs Birling.
- BIRLING - *astounded*:** Mrs Birling!
- MRS BIRLING:** Yes, I think it was simply a piece of gross impertinence - quite deliberate - and naturally that was one of the things that prejudiced me against her case.
- BIRLING:** And I should think so! Damned impudence!
- 1035 **INSPECTOR:** You admit being prejudiced against her case?
- MRS BIRLING:** Yes.
- SHEILA:** Mother, she's just died a horrible death. Don't forget.
- MRS BIRLING:** I'm very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame.
- INSPECTOR:** Was it owing to your influence, as the most prominent member of the committee,
- 1040 that help was refused the girl?
- MRS BIRLING:** Possibly.
- INSPECTOR:** Was it or was it not your influence?
- MRS BIRLING - *stung*:** Yes, it was. I didn't like her manner. She'd impertinently made use of our name, though she pretended afterwards it just happened to be the first she thought of. She
- 1045 had to admit, after I began questioning her, that she had no claim to the name, that she wasn't married, and that the story she told at first - about a husband who'd deserted her - was quite false. It didn't take me long to get the truth - or some of the truth - out of her.
- INSPECTOR:** Why did she want help?
- MRS BIRLING:** You know very well why she wanted help.
- 1050 **INSPECTOR:** No, I don't. I know why she needed help. But as I wasn't there, I don't know what she asked from your committee.
- MRS BIRLING:** I don't think we need discuss it.
- INSPECTOR:** You have no hope of not discussing it, Mrs Birling.
- MRS BIRLING:** If you think you can bring any pressure to bear upon me, Inspector, you're quite
- 1055 mistaken. Unlike the other three, I did nothing I'm ashamed of or that won't bear investigation. The girl asked for assistance. We were asked to look carefully into the claims made upon us. I wasn't satisfied with the girl's claim. She seemed to me not a good case, and so I used my influence to have it refused. And in spite of what's happened to the girl since, I consider I did my duty. So if I prefer not to discuss it any further. You have no
- 1060 power to make me change my mind.
- INSPECTOR:** Yes, I have.
- MRS BIRLING:** No, you don't. Simply because I've done nothing wrong - and you know it.
- INSPECTOR - *very deliberately*:** I think you did something terribly wrong - and that you're going to spend the rest of your life regretting it. I wish you'd been with me tonight in the
- 1065 infirmary. You'd have seen.
- SHEILA - *bursting in*:** No, no, please! Not that again. I've imagined it enough already.
- INSPECTOR - *very deliberately*:** Then the next time you imagine it, just remember that this girl was going to have a child.
- SHEILA - *horrified*:** No! Oh - horrible - horrible! How could she have wanted to kill herself?
- 1070 **INSPECTOR:** Because she'd been turned out and turned down too many times. This was the end.
- SHEILA:** Mother, you must have known.
- INSPECTOR:** it was because she was going to have a child that she went for assistance to your mother's committee.

- BIRLING:** Look here, this wasn't Gerald Croft ...
- 1075 **INSPECTOR - *cutting in, sharply*:** No, no. nothing to do with him.
- SHEILA:** Thank goodness for that! Though I don't know why I should care now.
- INSPECTOR - *to Mrs Birling*:** And you've nothing further to tell me, eh?
- MRS BIRLING:** I'll tell you what I told her. Go and look for the father of the child. It's his responsibility.
- 1080 **INSPECTOR:** That doesn't make it any the less yours. She came to you for help, at a time when no woman could have needed it more. And you not only refused it yourself but saw to it that the others refused it too. She was here alone, friendless, almost penniless, desperate. She needed not only money but advice, sympathy, friendliness. You've had children. You must have known what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face.
- 1085 **SHEILA - *with feeling*:** Mother, I think it was cruel and vile.
- BIRLING - *dubiously*:** I must say, Sybil, that when this comes out at the inquest, it isn't going to do us much good. The press might easily take it up~
- MRS BIRLING - *agitated now*,** Oh, stop it, both of you. And please remember before you start accusing me of anything again that it wasn't I who had her turned out of her employment -
- 1090 which probably began it all. [*Turning to Inspector:*] In the circumstances I think I was justified. The girl had begun by telling us a pack of lies. Afterwards, when I got at the truth, I discovered that she knew who the father was, she was quite certain about that, and so I told her it was her business to make him responsible. If he refused to marry her - and in my opinion he ought to be compelled to - then he must at least support her.
- 1095 **INSPECTOR:** And what did she reply to that?
- MRS BIRLING:** Oh - a lot of silly nonsense!
- INSPECTOR:** What was it?
- MRS BIRLING:** Whatever it was, I know it made me finally lose all patience with her. She was giving herself ridiculous airs. She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that
- 1100 were simply absurd in a girl in her position.
- INSPECTOR - *very sternly*:** Her position now is that she lies with a burnt-out inside on a slab. [*As Birling tries to protest, he turns on him:*] Don't stammer and yammer at me again, man. I'm losing all patience with you people. What did she say?
- MRS BIRLING - *rather cowed*:** She said that the father was only a youngster, silly and wild and
- 1105 drinking too much. There couldn't be any question of marrying him. It would be wrong for them both. He had given her money but she didn't want to take any more money from him.
- INSPECTOR:** Why didn't she want to take and more money from him?
- MRS BIRLING:** All a lot of nonsense. I didn't believe a word of it.
- INSPECTOR:** I'm not asking you if you believed it. I want to know what she said. Why didn't she
- 1110 want to take any more money from this boy?
- MRS BIRLING:** Oh, she had some fancy reason. As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money!
- INSPECTOR - *sternly*:** I warn you, you're making in worse for yourself. What reason did she give for not taking any more money?
- MRS BIRLING:** Her story was - that he'd said something one night, when he was drunk, that
- 1115 gave her the idea that it wasn't his money.
- INSPECTOR:** Where had he got it from then?
- MRS BIRLING:** He'd stolen it.
- INSPECTOR:** So she'd come to you for assistance because she didn't want to take stolen money?
- MRS BIRLING:** That's the story she finally told, after I'd refused to believe her original story -
- 1120 that she was a married woman who'd been deserted by her husband. I didn't see any reason to believe that one story should be any truer than the other. Therefore, you're quite wrong to suppose I shall regret what I did.
- INSPECTOR:** But if her story was true, if this boy had been giving her stolen money, then she came to you for help because she wanted to keep this youngster out of any more trouble -

1125 isn't that so?

**MRS BIRLING:** Possibly. But it sounded ridiculous to me. So I was perfectly justified in advising my committee not to allow her claim for assistance.

**INSPECTOR:** you're not even sorry now, when you know what happened to the girl?

1130 **MRS BIRLING:** I'm sorry she should have come to such a horrible end. But I accept no blame for it at all.

**INSPECTOR:** Who is to blame then?

**MRS BIRLING:** First, the girl herself.

**SHEILA - bitterly:** For letting father and me have her chucked out of her jobs!

1135 **MRS BIRLING:** Secondly, I blame the young man who was the father of the child she was going to have. If, as she said, he didn't belong to her class, and was some drunken young idler, then that's all the more reason why he shouldn't escape. He should be made an example of. If the girl's death is due to anybody, then it's due to him.

**INSPECTOR:** And if her story is true - that he was stealing money.

**MRS BIRLING - rather agitated now:** There's no point in assuming that.

1140 **INSPECTOR:** but suppose we do, what then?

**MRS BIRLING:** Then he'd be entirely responsible - because the girl wouldn't have come to us, and have been refused assistance, if it hadn't been for him.

**INSPECTOR:** So he's the chief culprit anyhow.

**MRS BIRLING:** Certainly. And he ought to be dealt with very severely.

1145 **SHEILA - with sudden alarm:** Mother - stop - stop!

**BIRLING:** Be quiet, Sheila!

**SHEILA:** But don't you see ...

1150 **MRS BIRLING - severely:** You're behaving like a hysterical child tonight. *[Sheila begins crying quietly. Mrs Birling turns to the Inspector.]* And if you'd take some steps to find this young man and then make sure that he's compelled to confess in public his responsibility - instead of staying here asking quite unnecessary questions - then you really would be doing your duty.

**INSPECTOR - grimly:** Don't worry Mrs Birling. I shall do my duty. *[He looks at his watch.]*

**MRS BIRLING - triumphantly:** I'm glad to hear it.

1155 **INSPECTOR:** No hushing up, eh? Make an example of the young man, eh? Public confession of responsibility - um?

**MRS BIRLING:** Certainly. I consider it your duty. And now no doubt you'd like to say good night.

**INSPECTOR:** Not yet. I'm waiting.

**MRS BIRLING:** Waiting for what?

1160 **INSPECTOR:** To do my duty.

**SHEILA - distressed:** Now, mother - don't you see?

**MRS BIRLING - understanding now:** But surely ... I mean ... it's ridiculous. *[She stops and exchanges a frightened glance with her husband.]*

1165 **Birling - now terrified:** Look Inspector, you're not trying to tell us that ... that my boy is mixed up in this?

**INSPECTOR - sternly:** If he is, then we know what to do, don't we? Mrs Birling has just told us.

**BIRLING - thunderstruck:** My God! But ... took here ...

**MRS BIRLING - agitated:** I don't believe it. I won't believe it.

**SHEILA:** Mother - I begged you and begged you to stop.

1170 *[Inspector holds up a hand. Eric enters, looking extremely pale and distressed. He meets their inquiring stares.]*

END OF ACT TWO