

## 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.

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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  
780 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?

[*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, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his.

820 **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 blouse.

830 **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 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?

840 **GERALD:** We went along to the county hotel which I knew would be quiet at that time of 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 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.

850 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 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.

860 **GERALD - *steadily*:** I discovered, not that night but two nights later, when we met again - not 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 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.

865 **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 - 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 were simply absurd in a girl in her position.

1100 **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 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.

1110 **INSPECTOR:** I'm not asking you if you believed it. I want to know what she said. Why didn't she 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?

1115 **MRS BIRLING:** Her story was - that he'd said something one night, when he was drunk, that 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?

1120 **MRS BIRLING:** That's the story she finally told, after I'd refused to believe her original story - 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