

MR B 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 Birling 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 B Now, Arthur, I don't think you ought to talk business on an occasion like this.

SHEILA Neither do I. All wrong.

MR B Quite so - 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.

MR B (RAISING HIS GLASS) So here's wishing the pair of you, the very best that life can bring. Gerald and Sheila.

MRS B Yes Gerald. Yes, Sheila darling. Our congratulations and very best wishes!

GERALD Thank you.

MRS B Eric!

ERIC (RATHER NOISILY) All the best! She's got a nasty temper sometimes - but she's not bad really. Good old Sheila!

SHEILA Chump! I can't drink to this, can I? When do I drink?

GERALD You can drink to me.

SHEILA (QUIET AND SERIOUS NOW) All right then, I drink to you Gerald. (THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER)

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 Well perhaps this will help to stop it. (HE PRODUCES A RING CASE)

SHEILA Oh - Gerald - you've got it - is it the one you wanted me to have?

GERALD Yes - the very one.

SHEILA Oh - it's wonderful - look Mummy - isn't it a beauty - oh darling (SHE KISSES GERALD HASTILY)

ERIC Steady on!

SHEILA (PUTS IT ON) Now I really feel engaged.

MRS B So you ought darling. It's a lovely ring. Be careful with it.

SHEILA I'll never let it go out of my sight for an instant.

MRS B 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 leave you men -

MR B 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 don't often make speeches at you -

SHEILA I'm sorry Daddy. Actually I was listening.

MR B 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 - and soon it'll be an even better 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.

ERIC What about war?

MR B Just because the Kaiser makes a speech or two, or a few German officers have too much to drink and begin talking nonsense -

ERIC Yes - I know - but still -

MR B Just let me finish Eric. You've a lot to learn yet.

\*\*\*\*\*

MR BIRLING    I'm talking as a hard-headed, 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 automobile '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 - fortysix 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 talking nonsense and a few scaremongers here making a fuss about nothing. Now remember what I'm telling you now. In 20 or 30 years' time - let's say in 1940 - you 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.

\*\*\*\*\*

ERIC / GERALD / EDNA / MR B / INSPECTOR

ERIC           Somebody at the front door.

MR B           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.

MR B           Special occasion. And feeling contented, for once, I wanted you to have the benefit of my experience

EDNA           (ENTERING) Please, Sir, an inspector's called.

MR B           An inspector? What kind of inspector?

EDNA           A police inspector. He says his name's Inspector Goole.

MR B           Don't know him, does he want to see me?

EDNA           Yes sir, he says it's important.

MR B           All right Edna. Show him in here. (EDNA EXITS) 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. And that would be awkward wouldn't it?

MR B           (HUMOUROUSLY) Very.

ERIC           (SHARPLY) Here, what do you mean?

GERALD       (LIGHTLY) Only something we were talking about when you were out. A joke really.

ERIC           Well I don't think it's very funny.

MR B           What's the matter with you?

ERIC           (DEFIANTLY) Nothing.

EDNA           Inspector Goole.

INSP           Mr Birling?

MR B           Yes. Sit down Inspector. A glass of port - or a little whisky?

INSP           No thank you Mr Birling. I'm on duty.

MR B           Well what can I do for you? Some trouble about a warrant?

INSP           I'd like some information, if you don't mind Mr Birling. Two hours ago a young woman died in 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           My god!

INSP           Yes she was in great agony. They did everything they could for her, but she died. Suicide of course.

5

MR B Yes yes horrible business. But I don't understand why you should come here Inspector-

INSP Her original name - her real name - was Eva Smith.

MR B (THOUGHTFULLY) Eva Smith?

INSP Do you remember her Mr Birling?

MR B No - I seem to remember hearing that name - Eva Smith - somewhere. But I don't see where I come into this.

INSP She was employed in your works at one time.

MR B We've several hundred young women there, you know, and they keep changing.

INSP This young woman Eva Smith was a bit out of the ordinary. I found a photograph of her in her lodgings. Perhaps you'd remember her from that. (SHOWS MR B THE PHOTO, BUT CONCEALING IT FROM ERIC AND GERALD)

GERALD Any particular reason why I shouldn't see this girl's photograph Inspector?

INSP There might be.

ERIC And the same applies to me I suppose?

INSP Yes.

GERALD I can't imagine what it could be.

ERIC Neither can I.

INSP It's the way I like to go to work. One person at a time. Otherwise there's a muddle.

MR B I see. Sensible really. You've had enough of that port Eric.

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

MR B She was one of my employees and then I discharged her.

ERIC Is that why she committed suicide? When was this Father?

MR B Just keep quiet Eric. This girl left us nearly two years ago. Let me see - it must have been in the early autumn of 1910.

INSP Yes. End of September 1910.

MR B Look there's nothing mysterious - or scandalous - about this business - at least not so far as I'm concerned. As it happened nearly two years ago, obviously it has nothing to do with the wretched girl's suicide. Eh, Inspector?

INSP No sir. I can't agree with you there. 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.

\*\*\*\*\*

- MR B           About this girl - Eva Smith. I remember her quite well now. A lively, good-looking girl - country bred I fancy - and she'd been working in one of our machine shops for over a year. A good worker too. The foreman told me he was ready to promote her. But after they came back from their holidays that August, they suddenly decided to ask for more money. They were averaging about 22 and six, which was neither more nor less than is paid generally in our industry. They wanted the rates raised so they could average about 25 shillings a week. I refused of course.
- INSP           Why?
- MR B           I don't see that it's any concern of yours how I choose to run my business.
- INSP           It's my duty to ask questions.
- MR B           Well it's my duty to keep labour costs down, and if I'd agreed to this demand we'd have added about 12 percent to our labour costs. Does that satisfy you? So I refused. 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.
- ERIC           It isn't if you can't go and work somewhere else.
- INSP           Quite so.
- MR B           (TO ERIC) 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. Pitiful affair. Well, we let them all come back - at the old rates - except the 4 or 5 ringleaders. 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.
- ERIC           You could have kept her on instead of throwing her out. I call it tough luck.
- MR B           Rubbish! If you don't come down sharply on some of these people, they'd soon be asking for the earth.
- INSP           They might. But after all it's better to ask for the earth than to take it.
- ERIC           Well I think it's a damn shame! 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.
- MR B           Unless you brighten your ideas, you'll never be in a position to let anybody stay or to tell them to go. It's about time you learnt to face a few responsibilities. That's something this public school and university life you've had doesn't seem to teach you.
- ERIC           Well we don't need to tell the Inspector all about that do we?

\*\*\*\*\*

SHEILA Was that her name? Eva Smith?

INSP Like a lot of these young women, she'd used more than one name. She was still Eva Smith when Mr Birling sacked her -

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

MR B Rubbish! Do you know what happened to this girl after she left my works?

INSP Yes. She was out of work for the next two months. Both parents were dead so 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 with no work, no money coming in, and living in lodgings, with no relatives to help her, few friends, lonely, half-starved, she was feeling desperate.

SHEILA I should think so. It's a rotten shame.

INSP 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 wouldn't know where to look for cheap labour. As your father knows.

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

INSP (DRYLY) I've had that notion myself from time to time.

SHEILA But what happened to her then?

INSP 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. She was lucky to get taken on at Milwards.

INSP That's what she thought. It seems she liked working there. It was a nice change from a factory. She enjoyed being among pretty clothes, I've no doubt. And now she felt she was making a fresh good start. You can imagine how she felt.

SHEILA Yes, of course.

MR B And then she got herself into trouble there I suppose?

INSP After a couple of months, just when she felt she was settling in nicely, they told her she'd have to go.

BIRLING Not doing her work properly?

INSP There was nothing wrong with her work. They admitted that. All she knew was - that a customer had complained about her - and so she had to go.

SHEILA (AGITATED) When was this?

INSP At the end of January, last year.

SHEILA What - what did this girl look like?

INSP If you'll come over here, I'll show you. (SHOWS HER THE PHOTO. SHE GIVES A CRY AND RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM)

MR B Why the devil do you want to go upsetting the child like that?

INSP I didn't do it - she's upsetting herself

MR B We were having a nice little family celebration tonight. And a nasty mess you've made of it now haven't you?

INSP 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 promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it. (BIRLING EXITS)

SHEILA (RE-ENTERING - SHE'S BEEN CRYING) You knew it was me all the time didn't you.

INSP I had an idea it might be - from something the girl herself wrote in the diary I found.

SHEILA I 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?

INSP 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 So I'm really responsible.

INSP Not entirely. A good deal happened to her after that. But you're partly to blame. Just as your father is.

SHEILA I went to the manager at Milwards and 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 account with them.

INSP And why did you do that?

SHEILA Because I was in a furious temper.

INSP And what had this girl done to make you lose your temper?

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 girl too - with big dark eyes - and that didn't make it any better. 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 BUT CONTROLS HERSELF) How could I know what would happen? If 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.

INSP In fact, you might be said to have been jealous of her.

SHEILA Yes I suppose so.

INSP 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-

INSP But you can't. It's too late. She's dead.

\*\*\*\*\*



## 9 SHEILA / GERALD

SHEILA Well Gerald?

GERALD 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 known her?

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

GERALD Alright. I knew her. Let's leave it at that.

SHEILA We can't leave it at that.

GERALD Now listen darling -

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 DOESN'T REPLY) Was it after she left Milwards? When she changed her name, as she said, and began to lead a different sort of life? Were you seeing her last spring and summer, during that time when you hardly came near me and said you were so busy? Were you? (HE DOESN'T REPLY) 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.

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 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.

\*\*\*\*\*

10 SHEILA / GERALD / INSPECTOR

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

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

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

SHEILA Of course he did.

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

GERALD Alright, if you must have it. I met her first in the stalls bar at the Palace. I mean the Palace music hall here in Brumley-

SHEILA We didn't think you meant Buckingham Palace.

GERALD 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?

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-

INSP Yes Mr Croft - in the stalls bar at the Palace Variety Theatre...

GERALD I happened to look in, one night, after a rather 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 -

SHEILA Go on Gerald. You went down into the bar, which is a favourite haunt of women of the town.

GERALD I'm glad I amuse you -

INSP Come along Mr Croft. What happened?

GERALD I didn't propose to stay long. 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 - my god!

INSP What's the matter?

GERALD (DISTRESSED) Sorry - I - well - I've suddenly realised, taken it in properly - that she's dead -

INSP Yes she's dead.

SHEILA And probably between us we killed her.

INSP Go on.

GERALD She looked young and fresh and charming and altogether out of place down there. 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 - he's a notorious womanizer as well being one of the worst sots and womanizers in Brumley -

INSP Quite right.

SHEILA 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.

INSP 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 Meggarty some nonsense - that the manager had a message for him or something - 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.

INSP            Where did you go?

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.

INSP            Did she drink much at that 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 Meggarty's advances had left her rather shaken.

INSP            She talked about herself?

GERALD        I couldn't get any exact details from her about her past life. She wanted to talk 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 actually hungry. I made the people at the hotel find some food for her.

INSP            And then you decided to keep her - as your mistress?

SHEILA        Of course - it was obvious from the start.

GERALD        I discovered - not that night but two nights later, when we met again - not accidentally this time of course - that in fact she hadn't a penny and was going to be turned out of that miserable back room she had. It happened that a friend of mine 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 asked me to keep an eye on them for him and use them if I wanted to. So I insisted on Daisy moving into those rooms and I made her take some money to keep her going. 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.

INSP            I see.

SHEILA        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        I know - somehow he makes you.

INSP            But she became your mistress?

GERALD        Yes. I suppose it was inevitable. She was young and pretty and warm-hearted - and intensely grateful. I became the most important person in her life - you understand?

INSP            Yes. She was a woman. She was lonely. Were you in love with her?

GERALD        It's hard to say. I didn't feel about her as she felt about me.

SHEILA        Of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it Gerald.

GERALD        Alright - 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 a complete lie when I said I'd been very busy at the works all that time. But of course I did see a good deal of her. Is there anything else you want to know - that you ought to know?

INSP Yes. When did this affair end?

GERALD I can tell you exactly. In 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 I broke it off definitely before I left.

INSP How did she take it?

GERALD Better than I'd hoped. She was very...gallant..about it.

SHEILA That was nice for you.

GERALD No it wasn't. (PAUSE) She told me that 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.

INSP She had to move out of those rooms?

GERALD Yes, we'd agreed about that. She didn't want to take any more from me but I insisted on a parting gift of enough money to see her through to the end of the year.

INSP Did she tell you what she proposed to do after you'd left her.

GERALD No she refused to talk about that.

INSP 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 I see. Well I never saw her again, and that's all I can tell you.

INSP 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 little while - I'd be glad if you'd let me go. I'll come back.

INSP 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. (HANDS HIM THE RING)

GERALD I see. Well I was expecting this.

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. 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.

GERALD I'm coming back - if I may.

SHEILA Alright.

\*\*\*\*\*

13 SHEILA/ INSPECTOR / MRS BIRLING

MRS B You have a photograph of this girl?

INSP Yes. I think you'd better look at it.

MRS B I don't see any particular reason why I should -

INSP Probably not. But you'd better look at it.

MRS B Very well.

INSP Your recognise her?

MRS B No. Why should I?

INSP Of course she might have changed lately, but I can't believe she could have changed so much.

MRS B I don't understand you Inspector.

INSP You mean you don't choose to Mrs Birling.

MRS B I meant what I said.

INSP You're not telling me the truth.

MRS B I beg your pardon!

SHEILA We've no excuse now for putting on airs, and 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 recognise her from that photograph. I admit I don't know why you should, but I know you jolly well did recognise her, from the way you looked.

INSP Mrs Birling, you're a member - a prominent member - of the Brumley Women's Charity Organization aren't you? (NO REPLY)

SHEILA Go on Mother. You might as well admit it. Yes she is. Why?

INSP It's an organization to which women in distress can appeal for help in various forms. Isn't that so?

MRS B We've done a great deal of useful work in helping deserving cases.

INSP There was a meeting of the interviewing committee two weeks ago?

MRS B I dare say there was.

INSP You know very well there was Mrs Birling. You were in the chair.

MRS B And if I was, what business is it of yours?

INSP She appealed to your organisation for help?

MRS B Yes.

INSP Not as Eva Smith?

MRS B No. Nor as Daisy Renton.

- INSP As what then?
- MRS B First she called herself Mrs Birling -
- SHEILA Mrs Birling?
- MRS B 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.
- INSP You admit being prejudiced against her case?
- MRS B Yes.
- SHEILA Mother, she's just died a horrible death, don't forget.
- MRS B I'm very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame.
- INSP Was it owing to your influence, as the most prominent member of the committee, that help was refused the girl?
- MRS B Possibly.
- INSP Was it or was it not your influence?
- MRS B 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 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.
- INSP Why did she want help?
- MRS B You know very well why she wanted help.
- INSP 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 B I don't think we need to discuss it.
- INSP You have no hope of not discussing it Mrs Birling.
- MRS B If you think you can bring any pressure to bear upon me Inspector, you're quite mistaken. Unlike the other three, I did nothing I'm ashamed of or that won't bear investigation. The girl asked for assistance. We are asked to look carefully into the claims made upon us. I wasn't satisfied with this girl's claim - she seemed to me to be 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 I prefer not to discuss it any farther. I've done nothing wrong - and you know it.
- INSP 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 Infirmary. You'd have seen-
- SHEILA No no please - not that again! I've imagined it enough already.
- INSP Then the next time you imagine it, remember that this girl was going to have a child.
- SHEILA No! Oh horrible - horrible. How could she have wanted to kill herself?
- INSP Because she'd been turned out and turned down too many times. This was the end.

SHEILA           Mother you must have known!

INSP             And you've nothing further to tell me eh?

MRS B           I'll tell you what I told her. Go and look for the father of the child. It's his responsibility.

INSP             That doesn't make it any the less yours. She came to you 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.

SHEILA           Mother I think it was cruel and vile.

MRS B           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, 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.

INSP             And what did she reply to that?

MRS B           Oh a lot of silly nonsense.

INSP             What was it?

MRS B           Whatever it was, it finally made me lose all patience with her. She was giving herself ridiculous airs, claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position.

INSP             Her position is that she now lies with a burnt out inside on a slab. **What did she say?**

MRS B           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.

INSP             Why?

MRS B           Oh she had some fancy reason. As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money!

INSP             I warn you, you're making it worse for yourself. What reason did she give for refusing more money?

MRS B           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. That he'd stolen it.

INSP             So she'd come to you for assistance because she didn't want to take stolen money?

MRS B           I didn't see any reason to believe that one story was any truer than the other. You're quite wrong to suppose I shall regret what I did.

INSP             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 trouble - isn't that so?

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

\*\*\*\*\*

ERIC            You know, don't you?

INSPECTOR    Yes, we know.

MR B           There must be some mistake.

SHEILA        Mother's been busy blaming everything on the young man who got this girl into trouble, and saying he shouldn't escape and should be made an example of -

MR B           That's enough Sheila.

MR B           You're not the type - you don't get drunk -

SHEILA        Of course he does - I told Mother he did.

ERIC            You told her! Why you little sneak!

SHEILA        No that's not fair Eric. I could have told her months ago, but of course I didn't. I only told her tonight because I knew everything was coming out -

MR B           If you had any sense of loyalty -

INSP            Just a minute Mr Birling. I'd be obliged if you'd let us get on without any further interruptions. (TO ERIC) Now then.

ERIC            Could I have a drink first?

MR B           No!

INSP            Yes. I know - he's your son and this is your house - but look at him. He needs a drink now just to see him through.

MR B           Alright. Go on.

ERIC'S HANDLING OF THE DECANTER SHOWS HIS FAMILIARITY WITH QUICK, HEAVY DRINKING

MR B           I understand a lot of things now I didn't understand before.

INSP            Don't start on that. I want to get on. When did you first meet this girl?

ERIC            One night last November.

INSP            Where did you meet her.

ERIC            In the Palace bar. I'd been there an hour or so with two or three chaps. I was a bit squiffy.

INSP            What happened then?

ERIC            I began talking to her, and stood her a few drinks. I was rather far gone by the time we had to go.

INSP            Was she drunk too?

ERIC            She told me afterwards she was a bit, chiefly because she'd not had much to eat that day.

INSP            Why had she gone there?



- ERIC She wasn't the usual sort. But - well - I suppose she didn't know what to do. There was some woman who wanted her to go there - I never quite understood about that.
- INSP You went with her to her lodgings that night?
- ERIC Yes - I insisted - it seems. I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that - well, I was in that state when a chap can easily turn nasty - and I threatened to make a row.
- INSP So she let you in.
- ERIC And that's when it happened. And I didn't even remember - that's the hellish thing. Oh - my god - how stupid it all is!
- INSP When did you meet her again?
- ERIC About a fortnight afterwards.
- INSP By appointment?
- ERIC No. And I couldn't remember her name or where she lived. It was all very vague. But I happened to see her again in the Palace bar.
- INSP More drinks?
- ERIC Yes though that time I wasn't so bad.
- INSP But you took her home again?
- ERIC Yes, and this time we talked a bit. She told me something about herself and I talked too. Told her my name and what I did.
- INSP And you made love again?
- ERIC Yes. I wasn't in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty - and a good sport.
- MR B So you had to go to bed with her?
- ERIC I'm old enough to be married aren't I? And I'm not married, and I hate those fat old tarts round the town - the ones I see some of your respectable friends with -
- MR B I don't want any of that talk from you -
- INSP I don't want any of it from either of you. Did you arrange to see each other after that?
- ERIC Yes. And the next time - or the time after that - she told me she thought she was going to have a baby. She wasn't quite sure. And then she was.
- INSP And of course she was very worried about it?
- ERIC Yes and so was I. I was in a hell of a state about it.
- INSP Did she suggest that you ought to marry her?
- ERIC She didn't want me to marry her. Said I didn't love her - and all that. In a way - she treated me as if I was a kid. Though I was nearly as old as she was.
- INSP So what did you propose to do?

ERIC Well she hadn't a job - and she'd no money left- so I insisted on giving her enough money to keep her going - until she refused to take any more -

INSP How much did you give her altogether?

ERIC I suppose about 50 pounds all told.

MR B Fifty pounds - on top of drinking and going around the town! Where did you get 50 pounds from?

INSP That's my question too.

ERIC I got it ....from the office.

MR B My office?

ERIC Yes.

INSP You mean - you stole the money?

ERIC Not really.

MR B What do you mean, not really?

ERIC I intended to pay it back.

MR B We've heard that story before. How could you have paid it back?

ERIC I'd have managed somehow. I had to have some money -

MR B I don't understand how you could take as much as that out of the office without somebody knowing.

ERIC There were some small accounts to collect, and I asked for cash -

MR B Gave the firm's receipt and then kept the money, eh?

ERIC Yes.

MR B You must give me a list of those accounts. I've got to cover this up as soon as I can. You damned fool - why didn't you come to me when you found yourself in this mess?

ERIC Because you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble - that's why.

MR B Don't talk to me like that. Your trouble is - you've been spoilt -

INSP And my trouble is, I haven't much time. Just one last question. The girl discovered that this money you were giving her was stolen, didn't she?

ERIC Yes. That was the worst of all. She wouldn't take any more and she didn't want to see me again. But how did you know that?

SHEILA She told Mother.

ERIC But she couldn't have come here, she didn't even know I lived here. What happened - tell me what happened.

INSP She went to your mother's committee for help. Your mother refused that help.

\*\*\*\*\*









At least it's honest.





