

Extract 1 – Sheila and Gerald’s Engagement Toast

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.

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.

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 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: (*quite and serious now*) All right then. I drink to you, Gerald.

(*for a moment 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: (*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?

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.

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-

Extract 2 – Mr Birling's speech to Eric and Gerald about society and war

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 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?

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 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, 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 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 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.

Mrs Birling: Arthur!

(As Mrs Birling shows signs of interrupting.)

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.

Extract 3 – Mr Birling's interrogation by the Inspector about his role in Eva's death

Birling: Oh well – put like that, there's something in what you say. Still, I can't accept any 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-

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 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 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 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.

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.

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 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.

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 come down 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.

Extract 4 – Sheila’s interrogation by the Inspector about her role in Eva’s death

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?

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 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.

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.

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?

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. 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 just controls herself.) How could I know what would happen afterwards? 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.

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

Sheila: Yes, I suppose so.

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----

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?

Extract 5 – Gerald’s interrogation by the Inspector about his role in Eva’s death

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 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 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.

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. 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 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 a moment, then in a low, troubled tone.*) She told me 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 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, 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.

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.

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.

Extract 6 – Mrs Birling’s interrogation by the Inspector about her role in Eva’s death

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 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.

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 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 power to make me change my mind.

Inspector: Yes I have.

Mrs Birling: No you haven'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 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?

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's fault-

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.

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.

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.

Extract 7: Eric's interrogation by the Inspector about his role in Eva's death

Mrs Birling: (*To Birling*) I'm sorry, Arthur, but I simply couldn't stay in there. I had to know what's happening.

Birling: (*savagely*) Well, I can tell you what's happening. He's admitted he was responsible for the girl's condition, and now he's telling us he supplied her with money he stole from the office.

Mrs Birling: (*shocked*) Eric! You stole money?

Eric: No, not really. I intended to pay it back.

Birling: 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-

Birling: 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--

Birling: Gave the firm's receipt and then kept the money, eh?

Eric: Yes.

Birling: 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.

Birling: (*angrily*) Don't talk to me like that. Your trouble is – you've been spoilt--

Inspector: (*cutting in*) And my trouble is – that I haven't much time. You'll be able to divide the responsibility between you when I've gone. (*To Eric.*) Just one last question, that's all. The girl discovered that this money you were giving her was stolen, didn't she?

Eric: (*miserably*) Yes. That was the worst of all. She wouldn't take any more, and she didn't want to see me again. (*sudden startled tone.*) Here, but how did you know that? Did she tell you?

Inspector: No. she told me nothing. I never spoke to her.

Sheila: She told mother.

Mrs Birling: (*alarmed*) Sheila!

Sheila: Well, he has to know.

Eric: (*to Mrs Birling*) She told you? Did she come here – but then she couldn't have done, she didn't even know I lived here. What happened?

(*Mrs Birling, distressed, shakes her head but does not reply.*) Come on, don't just look like that. Tell me – tell me – what happened?

Inspector: (*with clam authority*) I'll tell you. She went to your mother's committee for help, after she'd done with you. Your mother refused that help.

Eric: (*nearly at breaking point*) Then – you killed her. She came to you to protect me – and you turned her away – yes, and you killed her – and the child she'd have had too – my child – your own grandchild – you killed them both – damn you, damn you-

Mrs Birling: (*very distressed now*) No – Eric – please – I didn't know – I didn't understand-

Eric: (*almost threatening her*) You don't understand anything. You never did. You never even tried – you -

Sheila: (*frightened*) Eric, don't – don't-

Birling: (*furious, intervening*) Why, you hysterical young fool – get back – or I'll-

Extract 8 – The Inspector’s speech about social responsibility

Inspector: *(taking charge, masterfully)* Stop!

(They are suddenly quiet, staring at him.)

And be quiet for a moment and listen to me. I don't need to know any more. Neither do you. This girl killed herself – and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. (He looks from one to the other of them carefully.) But then I don't think you ever will. Remember what you did, Mrs Birling. You turned her away when she most needed help. You refused her even the pitiable little bit of organized charity you had in your power to grant her. Remember what you did-

Eric: *(unhappily)* My God – I'm not likely to forget.

Inspector: Just used her for the end of a stupid drunken evening, as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person. No, you won't forget. *(He looks at Sheila.)*

Sheila: *(bitterly)* I know. I had her turned out of a job. I started it.

Inspector: You helped – but you didn't start it. *(rather savagely, to Birling.)* You started it. She wanted twenty-five shillings a week instead of twenty-two and sixpence. You made her pay a heavy price for that. And now she'll make you pay a heavier price still.

Birling: *(unhappily)* Look, Inspector – I'd give thousands – yes, thousands-

Inspector: You're offering the money at the wrong time. Mr Birling. *(He makes a move as if concluding the session, possibly shutting up notebook, etc. Then surveys them sardonically.)* No, I don't think any of you will forget. Nor that young man, Croft, though he at least had some affection for her and made her happy for a time. Well, Eva Smith's gone. You can't do her any more harm. And you can't do her any good now, either. You can't even say “I'm sorry, Eva Smith.”

Sheila: *(who is crying quietly)* That's the worst of it.

Inspector: But just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and bloody and anguish. Good night.

(He walks straight out, leaving them staring, subdued and wondering. Sheila is still quietly crying. Mrs Birling has collapsed into a chair. Eric is brooding desperately. Birling, the only active one, hears the front door slam, moves hesitatingly towards the door, stops, looks gloomily at the other three, then pours himself out a drink, which he hastily swallows.)

Extract 9 – Conflict in the family – old vs young

Birling: (*angrily to Eric*) You're the one I blame for this.

Eric: I'll bet I am.

Birling: (*angrily*) Yes, and you don't realize yet all you've done. Most of this is bound to come out. There'll be a public scandal.

Eric: Well, I don't care now.

Birling: You! You don't seem to care about anything. But I care. I was almost certain for a knighthood in the next Honours List-

(*Eric laughs rather hysterically, pointing at him.*)

Eric: (*laughing*) Oh – for God's sake! What does it matter now whether they give you a knighthood or not?

Birling: (*sternly*) It doesn't matter to you. Apparently nothing matters to you. But it may interest you to know that until every penny of that money you stole is repaid, you'll work for nothing. And there's going to be no more of this drinking round the town – and picking up women in the palace bar-

Mrs Birling: (*coming to life*) I should think not. Eric, I'm absolutely ashamed of you.

Eric: Well, I don't blame you. But don't forget I'm ashamed of you as well – yes both of you.

Birling: (*angrily*) Drop that. There's every excuse for what both your mother and I did – it turned out unfortunately, that's all--

Sheila: (*scornfully*) That's all.

Birling: Well, what have you to say?

Sheila: I don't know where to begin.

Birling: Then don't begin. Nobody wants you to.

Sheila: I behaved badly too. I know I did I'm ashamed of it. But now you're beginning all over again to pretend that nothing much has happened-

Birling: Nothing much has happened! Haven't I already said there'll be a public scandal – unless we're lucky – and who here will suffer from that more than I will?

Sheila: But that's not what I'm talking about. I don't care about that. The point is, you don't seem to have learnt anything.

Birling: Don't I? Well, you're quite wrong there. I've learnt plenty tonight. And you don't want me to tell you what I've learnt, I hope. When I look back on tonight – when I think of what I was feeling when the five of us sat down to dinner at that table-

Eric: (*cutting in*) Yes, and do you remember what you said to Gerald and me after dinner, when you were feeling so pleased with yourself? You told us that a man has to make his own way, look after himself and mind his own business, and that we weren't to take any notice of these cranks who tell us that everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together. Do you remember? Yes – and then one of those cranks walked in – the Inspector. (*laughs bitterly.*) I didn't notice you told him that it's every man for himself.

Extract 10 – Unlike the older Birlings Sheila and Eric feel guilty and upset over Eva's death

Eric: (*sulkily*) I'm all right.

Birling: All right? You're anything but all right. And you needn't stand there – as if – as if –

Eric: As if – what?

Birling: As if you'd nothing to do with us. Just remember your own position, young man. If anybody's up to the neck in this business, you are, so you'd better take some interest in it.

Eric: I do take some interest in it. I take too much, that's my trouble.

Sheila: It's mine too.

Birling: Now listen, you two. If you're still feeling on edge, then the least you can do is to keep quiet. Leave this to us. I'll admit that fellow's antics rattled us a bit. But we've found him out – and all we have to do is to keep our heads. Now it's our turn.

Sheila: Our turn to do – what?

Mrs Birling: (*sharply*) To behave sensibly, Sheila – which is more than you're doing.

Eric: (*bursting out*) What's the use of talking about behaving sensibly. You're beginning to pretend now that nothing's really happened at all. And I can't see it like that. This girl's still dead, isn't she? Nobody's brought her to life, have they?

Sheila: (*eagerly*) That's just what I feel, Eric. And it's what they don't seem to understand.

Eric: whoever that chap was, the fact remains that I did what I did. And mother did what she did. And the rest of you did what you did to her. It's still the same rotten story whether it's been told to a police inspector or to somebody else. According to you, I ought to feel a lot better - (*To Gerald.*) I stole some money, Gerald, you might as well know - (*As Birling tries to interrupt.*) I don't care, let him know. The money's not the important thing. It's what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters. And I still feel the same about it, and that's why I don't feel like sitting down and having a nice cosy talk.

Sheila: And Eric's absolutely right. And it's the best thing any one of us has said tonight and it makes me feel a bit less ashamed of us. You're just beginning to pretend all over again.

Birling: Look – for God's sake!

Mrs Birling: (*protesting*) Arthur!

Birling: Well, my dear, they're so damned exasperating. They just won't try to understand our position or to see the difference between a lot of stuff like this coming out in a private and a downright public scandal.

Eric: (*shouting*) And I say the girl's dead and we all helped to kill her – and that's what matters -

Birling: (*also shouting, threatening Eric*) And I say – either stop shouting or get out. (*Glaring at him but in quiet tone.*) Some fathers I know would have kicked you out of the house anyhow by this time. So hold your tongue if you want to stay here.

Eric: (*quietly, bitterly*) I don't give a damn now whether I stay here or not.

Birling: You'll stay here long enough to give me an account of that money you stole – yes, and to pay it back too.

Sheila: But that won't bring Eva Smith back to life, will it?

Eric: And it doesn't alter the fact that we all helped to kill her.