

INSPECTOR. No, it isn't. But some things are left to me. Inquiries of this sort, for instance. (*Enter SHEILA, who looks as if she's been crying.*) Well, Miss Birling?

SHEILA. (*Coming in, closing door, crossing to D. C. past table.*) You knew it was me all the time, didn't you?

INSPECTOR. I had an idea it might be—(*GERALD crosses to SHEILA.*) from something the girl herself wrote.

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. (*Crosses to INSPECTOR.*) 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? (*GERALD crosses to U. R. chair.*)

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, crossing to R. of table as GERALD sits.*) 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 the 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 salesgirl, and I was furious with her. I'd been in a bad temper anyhow.

INSPECTOR. And was it the girl's fault?

SHEILA. No, not really. It was my own fault. (*Crosses to R. chair.*

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.

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 salesgirl—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 salesgirl—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 a very pretty girl, too—with soft fine hair and big gray 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 lost my temper. 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.* *Crosses R. to chair, sits.* *GERALD rises.* *ERIC crosses D. L.*) 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 looked as if she could take care of herself. I couldn't be sorry for her.

INSPECTOR. (*Crossing to SHEILA.*) 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.* *Rises, crosses D. R. and to fireplace.*) Oh, shut up, Eric. I know, I know. It's the only time I've ever done anything like that, and I'll 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? (*Goes down R. to table.*)

INSPECTOR. (*Sternly, as GERALD sits.*) That's what I asked myself

tonight when I was looking at that dead girl. And then I said to myself, "Well, we'll try to understand why it had to happen."

And that's why I'm here, and why I'm not going until I know all that happened. Eva Smith lost her job with Birling and Company because the strike failed and they were determined not to have another one. At last she found another job—under what name I don't know—in a big shop, and had to leave there because you were annoyed with yourself and passed the annoyance on to her. Now she had to try something else. So first she changed her name to Daisy Renton —

GERALD. (*Startled. Putting himself together.*) Can I get myself a drink, Sheila? (SHEILA merely nods, still staring at him, and he goes across to landladies on sideboard for a whiskey.)

INSPECTOR. Where is your father, Miss Birling?

SHEILA. He went into the drawing-room. Eric, will you take the Inspector along there, please? (*As ERIC moves, INSPECTOR looks from SHEILA to GERALD, then goes out, with ERIC, who opens door.* GERALD crosses to just above table, sits in chair.) Well,

Gerald?

GERALD. (*Trying to smile.*) Well what, Sheila?

SHEILA. How did you come to know this girl—Eva Smith?

GERALD. I didn't.

SHEILA. Daisy Renton, then—it's the same thing?

GERALD. Why should I have known her?

SHEILA. (*Crossing back of him.*) Oh, don't be stupid. We haven't much time. You gave yourself away as soon as he mentioned her other name.

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

SHEILA. We can't leave it at that. (*Below armchair.*)

GERALD. Now listen, darling — (*Rises, crosses to her.*)

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

GERALD. I'm sorry, Sheila. But it was all over and done with, last

summer. I haven'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. (*Crosses to her.*) So—for God's sake—don't say anything to the Inspector!

SHEILA. About you and this girl?

GERALD. Yes. We can keep it from him.

SHEILA. (*Laughs rather hysterically.*) Why—you fool—he knows! Of course he knows. And I hate to think how much he knows that we don't know yet. You'll see. You'll see. (*She looks at him almost in triumph. He looks crushed. Door slowly opens and INSPECTOR appears, looking steadily and searchingly at them. Door closes, signal for curtain.*)

SLOW CURTAIN