

spector 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!

INSPECTOR. They're right, y'know.

MRS. BIRLING. (*Trying to crush him.*) Really!

INSPECTOR. (*Imperturbable.*) Yes. Now what about Mr. Birling?

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?

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.

SHEILA. And he drinks far too much.

MRS. BIRLING. (*Very sharply.*) Sheila!

SHEILA. (*Gently.*) I don't want to get poor Eric into trouble. He's probably in enough trouble already. But we really must stop these silly pretenses. 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.

MRS. BIRLING. (*Staggered.* Rises, crosses down R. C.) It isn't true. You know him, Gerald—and you're a man—you must know it isn't true.

INSPECTOR. (*As Gerald hesitates.* Turning to him.) Well, Mr. Croft?

GERALD. (*Apologetically,* to Mrs. Birling. Crosses to chair L. of table.) 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. (Inspector crosses U. R. of table.)

MRS. BIRLING. (*Bitterly.*) And this is the time you choose to tell me!

SHEILA. (*Crossing to her.* GERALD sits L. chair.) 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 the 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!*

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shall be glad to answer any questions the Inspector wishes to ask me. Though naturally I don't know anything about this girl. (SHEILA crosses above U. chair of fireplace.)

INSPECTOR. (*Gravely.*) We'll see, Mrs. Birling. (*Enter BIRLING, who closes door behind him.*)

BIRLING. (*Rather hot, bothered.* Crosses at door. SHEILA crosses U.) 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? (SHEILA crosses to armchair.)

INSPECTOR. Yes, I did.

BIRLING. Why?

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

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. (*Crossing to him.*) Now look here, Inspector—

INSPECTOR. (*Cutting in, with authority.*) He must wait his turn.

SHEILA. (*To Mrs. Birling.*) You see? (*Crosses U. R., sits or leans.*)

MRS. BIRLING. No, I don't. And please be quiet, Sheila.

BIRLING. (*Angrily.* Crosses to fireplace.) Inspector, I've told you before, I don't like your tone nor the way you're handling this inquiry. And I don't propose to give you much more rope.

INSPECTOR. You needn't give me any rope.

SHEILA. (*Rather wildly, with laugh.*) No, he's giving us rope—so that we'll hang ourselves!

BIRLING. (*To Mrs. Birling.*) What's the matter with that child? (*Crosses to fireplace.*)

MRS. BIRLING. Over-excited. And she refuses to go. (*With sudden anger,* to 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 Milward's, because Miss Birling compelled them to discharge her, and then she stopped being Eva Smith, looking for a job, and became Daisy Renton, with other ideas. (*Sharply,* turning on GERALD.) Mr. Croft, when did you first get to know her? (*An exclamation of surprise from BIRLING and Mrs. BIRLING.*)

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

SHEILA. (*Sits on arm of chair above C. R.*) It's no use, Gerald. You're wasting time.

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?

GERALD. (*Crossing D. L.*) All right, if you must have it. I met her first some time in March last year, in the 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. (*Crosses to L. table.*) 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 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—

INSPECTOR. (*With authority.*) Be quiet, please. Yes, Mr. Croft—in the bar at the Palace Variety Theatre . . . ?

GERALD. (*Sits L. chair.*) I happened to go down there 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 favorite haunt of women of the town—

MRS. BURLING. Women of the town?

INSPECTOR. Prostitutes.

MRS. BURLING. Yes—but here—in Brumley—

INSPECTOR. One of the worst cities in the country for prostitution. BURLING. Quite true. But I see no point in mentioning the subject—especially— (*Indicating SHEILA.*)

MRS. BURLING. 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 favorite haunt of women of the town.

GERALD. I'm glad I amuse you—

INSPECTOR. (*Sits U. R., sharply.*) Come along, Mr. Croft. What happened?

GERALD. I didn't intend to stay down there long. I hate those hard-eyed dough-faced women. But then I noticed a girl who looked quite different. (*SHEILA crosses to R. chair, sits.*) She was very pretty—soft brown hair and big dark eyes— (*The breaks off.*) My God! (*Rises, wanders L. C.*)

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. Go on!

GERALD. (*Steps to table.*) This girl was charmingly dressed, too—in a simple inexpensive sort of way—and altogether she looked young and fresh and charming—and—what shall I say?—the opposite of hard and tough, and able to look after herself—She was quite 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—

MRS. BURLING. (*Cutting in.*) There's no need to be disgusting. (*Steps C.*) And surely you don't mean Alderman Meggarty?

GERALD. (*Crosses D. L., sits.*) Of course I do. He's a notorious womaniser and one of the worst sots and rogues in Brumley—

MRS. BURLING. (*Slaggered.*) Well, really! Alderman Meggarty! Well, we are learning something tonight! (*Crosses back D. R., sits.*)

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—

BURLING. (*Sharply shocked.*) Sheila!

INSPECTOR. (*To GERALD.*) Go on.

GERALD. This girl saw me looking at her and then gave me a glance, obviously an S.O.S. So I went across and told Joe Meggarty some nonsense—that the manager had a message for him or something— (*Crosses U. L. of table.*) got him out of the way—and then told the girl that if she didn't want any more of that sort of thing, she'd better let me take her out of there. She agreed at once.

INSPECTOR. Where did you go?

GERALD. We went 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 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 Joe Megarty's advances had left her rather shaken—as well they might.

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. (*Sits in L. chair.*) She also told me she'd had a job in one of the works here and had had to leave after a strike. (*Birling crosses U., then back.*) 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 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 County find some food for her.

INSPECTOR. And then you decided to keep her—as your mistress?

MRS. BIRLING. (*Rising.*) What?

SHEILA. Of course, Mother. It was obvious from the start. Go on, Gerald. Don't mind Mother. (*Alt L.*)

GERALD. (*Steadily.*) I discovered, not that night but two nights later, when we met again—not accidentally this time, of course—(*Mrs. Birling crosses behind D. R. chair.*) that in fact she hadn't a penny, and was going to be turned out of the miserable back room she had. It happened that a friend of mine, Charlie Brumwick, had gone off to Canada for six months and 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. (*Mrs. Birling sits.*) So I insisted on Daisy moving into those rooms of Charlie's, and I made her take some money to keep her going there. (*Carefully, to INSPECTOR.*) SHEILA *above R. chair.* I want you to understand that I didn't install her there so that I could make love to her. That came afterwards. I made her go to Morgan Terrace because I was sorry

for her, and didn't like the idea of her going back to the Palace bar. I didn't ask for anything in return.

INSPECTOR. I see.

SHEILA. Yes, but why are you saying that to him? You ought to be saying it to me.

GERALD. (*Rises.*) I suppose I ought, really. I'm sorry, Sheila. Somehow I—

SHEILA. (*Cutting in, as he hesitates.*) I know. Somehow he makes you. (*To Mrs. Birling.*) He does, y'know.

INSPECTOR. 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 at once the most important person in her life—you understand?

INSPECTOR. Yes. She was a woman. She was lonely. (*To GERALD.*) Were you in love with her?

SHEILA. (*Rises, crosses below chair R. of table.*) Just what I was going to ask.

BIRLING. (*Angrily. Rises.*) I really must object—

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 going to say was that I protest against the way 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.

SHEILA. (*Crossing to tender to Birling, who sits.*) Yes, and it was I who had the girl turned out of her job at Milward's. And I'm supposed to be engaged to Gerald. And I'm not a child, don't forget. I've a right to know. *Where you in love with her, Gerald?* (*Birling crosses to C., facing fireplace.*)

GERALD. (*Hesitatingly.*) It's hard to say. I didn't feel about her the way she felt about me.

SHEILA. (*With sharp sarcasm. Crosses to back of R. chair.*) Of course not. You were the wonderful Fairy Prince. You must have adored it, Gerald.

GERALD. All right—I did. 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 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. BURLING. (*Rising*) 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. (*Rising*) And you're not going to have any. (*To Mrs. Burling*) You know, Mrs. Burling, it wasn't disgusting.

MRS. BURLING. It's disgusting to me.

SHEILA. (*A step D. R.*) Yes, but you didn't come into this, did you, Mother?

GERALD. Is there anything else you'd like to know—that you ought to know? (*SHEILA crosses above R. chair.*)

INSPECTOR. Yes. When did this affair end?

GERALD. I can tell you exactly. In the first week of September. (*Crosses L. a bit below door.*) 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 for 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.

(*Steps D. L.*) Perhaps I'd feel better about it.

INSPECTOR. She had to leave 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 any 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 remember all that had happened between you.

GERALD. (*Steps toward Inspector.*) 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 that there'd never be anything as good for her again—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. (*Rising.*) It's all I want to know from you.

GERALD. (*Crossing to bin.*) 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.

INSPECTOR. Go? Where? Home?

GERALD. No. I'll just walk out—somewhere by myself. I'll come back.

INSPECTOR. All right, Mr. Croft. (*Crosses to alcove. GERALD starts to go.*)

SHEILA. (*Crossing D. C.*) But just in case you forget—or decide not to come back, Gerald, (*Crosses to bin D. L.*) I think you'd better take this with you. (*Hands him ring. BURLING rises—takes step to Mrs. Burling D. R.*)

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. 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—

BURLING. (*Steps toward her.*) 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.

GERALD. Yes, I know what you mean. (*GERALD goes to door.*)

BIRLING crosses to armchair D. L., sits.) 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—
GERALD. (*To fireplace on line.*) I don't think so. Excuse me. (*Pause. He goes out.*)

MRS. BIRLING. Well, really—I don't know. (*They watch him go in silence. The hear front door slam.* BIRLING crosses to D. R. chair—stands behind it. INSPECTOR at U. R. chair.)

SHEILA. (*To INSPECTOR, crossing to doorway.*) 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. (*Crossing between R. chair and table.*) Yes. I think you'd better look at it.

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. (*Crosses to him. He produces photograph and she looks hard at it.*)

INSPECTOR. (*Taking back photograph.*) You recognize her?

MRS. BIRLING. No. Why should I?

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

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

MRS. BIRLING. (*Angrily.*) I meant what I said.

INSPECTOR. You're not telling me the truth.

MRS. BIRLING. I beg your pardon!

BIRLING. (*Angrily, to INSPECTOR.* Crosses to him at fireplace.) Look here, I'm not going to have this, Inspector. You'll apologize at once.

INSPECTOR. Apologize for what—doing my duty?

BIRLING. No, for being so offensive about it. I'm a public man—
INSPECTOR. (*Massively.*) Public men, Mr. Birling, have their responsibilities as well as their 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. (*A step D. L.*)

MRS. BIRLING. Does that mean anything, Sheila? (*Crosses to SHEILA D. R.*)

SHEILA. It means that we've no excuse now for putting on airs and that if we've any sense we won't try. (*Crosses R. C.*) Now you're pretending you don't recognize her from that photograph. (*INSPECTOR crosses to fireplace.*) I admit I don't know why you 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 hear front door slam again.*)

MRS. BIRLING. (*Sits L. chair.*) Gerald must have come back.

INSPECTOR. Unless your son has just gone out.

BIRLING. I'll see. (*He goes out quickly.* INSPECTOR turns to MRS. BIRLING, at L. table. SHEILA crosses above R. chair.)

INSPECTOR. (*Crossing to fireplace.*) 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. (*Pause.*) Go on, Mother. You might as well admit it. (*To INSPECTOR.*) Yes, she is. Why?

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?

MRS. BIRLING. I daresay 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.* Crosses D. L.) Do you want me to tell you—in plain words? (*Enter BIRLING, looking rather agitated.* SHEILA crosses to alcove.)

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 don't need him here—

ACT II

SCENE: The same.

At rise, scene and situation are exactly as they were at end of Act I, except that main table has been pushed upstage slightly. INSPECTOR remains at door for a few moments looking at SHEILA and GERALD. Then comes forward, leaving door open behind him.

GERALD steps L. INSPECTOR crosses to U. L. chair.

INSPECTOR. (*To GERALD.*) Well?

SHEILA. (*With hysterical laugh, to GERALD.*) You see? What did I tell you?

INSPECTOR. What did you tell him?

GERALD. (*With an effort, crossing R. C. below table.*) Inspector, I think Miss Birling ought to be excused from any more of this questioning. She's told you all she knows. 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.

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?

INSPECTOR. No.

SHEILA. (*To GERALD.*) You see? (*To INSPECTOR.*) Then I'm staying.

GERALD. (*Crossing to her.*) Why should you? It's bound to be unpleasant and disturbing.

INSPECTOR. And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant things?

GERALD. (*Crossing to C.*) If possible—yes.

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

GERALD. (*Crossing U. to R. chair.*) I suppose I asked for that.

SHEILA. Be careful you don't ask for any more, Gerald.

GERALD. (*Crossing to her.*) I only meant to say to you—why stay when you'll obviously hate it?

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

GERALD. I see —

SHEILA. What do you see?

GERALD. You've been through it and now you want to see someone else go through it.

SHEILA. (*Bitterly.*) So that's what you think I'm really like! I'm glad I realized it in time, Gerald.

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. (*Crosses D. R. to table. GERALD follows.*) You listened to that nice story about me. I got that girl sacked from Milward's. 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.

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

GERALD. (*Crossing D. R.*) All right then, I'm sorry.

SHEILA. (*Turns to D. R. of table.*) Yes, but you don't believe me. And this is just the wrong time not to believe me.

INSPECTOR. (*Massively, taking charge.*) Allow me, Miss Birling. (*To GERALD as he crosses to below armchair.*) 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. Sits R. chair.*) Don't, please—I know, I know—and I can't stop thinking about it —

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 —