

Birling: (*very sharply*) You heard what I said. (*Gentler.*) Go on, Sybil.

// *He goes to open the door while Sheila takes her mother out. Then he closes it and comes in.*//

Inspector: When did you meet her again?

Eric: About a fortnight afterwards.

Inspector: 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.

Inspector: More drinks?

Eric: Yes, though that time I wasn't so bad.

Inspector: 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.

Inspector: 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--

Birling: (*harshly*) So you had to go to bed with her?

Eric: Well, I'm old enough to be married, aren't I, and I'm not married, and I hate these fat old tarts round the town – the ones I see some of your respectable friends with--

Birling: (*angrily*) I don't want any of that talk from you--

Inspector: (*very sharply*) I don't want any of it from either of you. Settle it afterwards. (*To Eric.*) 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.

Inspector: 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.

Inspector: Did she suggest that you ought to marry her?

Eric: No. 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 were a kid. Though I was nearly as old as she was.

Inspector: So what did you propose to do?

Eric: Well, she hadn't a job – and didn't feel like trying again for one – 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--

Inspector: How much did you give her altogether?

Eric: I suppose – about fifty pounds all told.

Birling: Fifty pounds – on top of drinking and going around the town! Where did you get fifty pounds from?

// As Eric does not reply.//

Inspector: That's my question too.

Eric: (*miserably*) I got it – from the office--

Birling: My office?

Eric: Yes.

Inspector: You mean – you stole the money?

Eric: Not really.

Birling: (*angrily*) What do you mean – not really?

// Eric does not reply because now Mrs Birling and Sheila come back.//

Sheila: This isn't my fault.

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* *bout 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.