Birling: (*explosively*) No.

Inspector: (*firmly*) Yes. (*As* Birling *looks like interrupting explosively*.) 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.

Birling: (*To* Eric) All right. Go on.

// Eric goes for a whisky. His whole manner of handling the decanter and then the drink shows his familiarity with quick heavy drinking. The others watch him narrowly.//

(*bitterly*) I understand a lot of things now I didn't understand before.

Inspector: Don't start on that. I want to get on. (*To* Eric.) When did you first meet this girl?

Eric: One night last November.

Inspector: 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.

Inspector: 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.

Inspector: Was she drunk too?

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

Inspector: 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 to help her go there. I never quite understood about that.

Inspector: 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 easily turns nasty – and I threatened to make a row.

Inspector: so she let you in?

Eric: Yes. 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!

Mrs Birling: (*with a cry*) Oh – Eric – how could you?

Birling: (*sharply*) Sheila, take your mother along to the drawing-room--

Sheila: (*protesting*) But – I want to –

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.*//