

Extract 3

- 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.
- SHEILA** (*sharply attentive*) Is that when the Inspector came, just after father had said that?
- ERIC** Yes. What of it?
- MRS B.** Now what's the matter, Sheila?
- SHEILA** (*slowly*) It's queer – very queer—(*she looks at them reflectively.*)
- MRS B.** (*with some excitement*) I know what you're going to say. Because I've been wondering myself.
- SHEILA** It doesn't much matter now, of course – but was he really a police inspector?
- BIRLING** Well, if he wasn't, it matters a devil of a lot. Makes all the difference.
- SHEILA** No, it doesn't.
- BIRLING** Don't talk rubbish. Of course it does.
- SHEILA** Well, it doesn't to me. And it oughtn't to you, either.