

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

A Play in Three Acts

(罪惡之家)

J. B. PRIESTLEY

1964. 北京

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

CHARACTERS

Arthur Birling

Sybil Birling

Sheila Birling

Eric Birling

Gerald Croft

Edna

Inspector Goole

ACTS

All three acts, which are continuous, take place in the dining-room of the Birlings's house in Brumley, an industrial city in the North Midlands. It is an evening in spring, 1912.

ACT I

The dining-room of a fairly large suburban house, belonging to a prosperous manufacturer. It has good solid furniture of the period. The general effect is substantial and heavily comfortable, but not cosy and homelike.¹

At rise of curtain, the four Birlings and Gerald are seated at the table, with Arthur Birling at one end, his wife at the other, Eric downstage, and Sheila and Gerald seated upstage. Edna, the parlourmaid, is just clearing the table, which has no cloth, of dessert plates and champagne glasses, etc, and then replacing them with decanter of port, cigar box and cigarettes. Port glasses are already on the table. All five are in evening dress of the period, the men in tails and white ties,² not dinnerjackets. Arthur Birling is a heavy-looking, rather portentous man in his middle fifties with fairly easy manners but rather provincial in his speech.³ His wife is about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior. Sheila is a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited. Gerald Croft is an attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the easy well-bred young man-about-town.⁴ Eric is in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive. At the moment they have all had a good dinner, are celebrating a special occasion, and are pleased with themselves.

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1. The general effect ... 屋子給人的印象是富裕闊綽，但是并无恬适之感。
 2. the men in tails and white ties 男的穿燕尾服，打白領結（这是正式礼服，dinner jacket 是无尾常礼服）。
 3. rather provincial in his speech 談吐有点土里土气。
 4. rather too manly to be a dandy... 他长得英俊挺拔，看来还不像是个只顧衣着修飾的纨绔子弟，但是仍不免是个受过良好教养，举止随便，游手好閑的游蕩青年。

Birling: Giving us the port, Edna? That's right. (*He pushes it towards Eric.*) You ought to like this port, Gerald. As a matter of fact, Finchley¹ told me it's exactly the same port your father gets from him.

Gerald: Then it'll be all right. The governor² prides himself on being a good judge of port. I don't pretend to know much about it.

Sheila (*gaily possessively*):³ I should jolly well think not, Gerald. I'd hate you to know all about port—like one of these purple-faced old men.

Birling: Here, I'm not a purple-faced old man.

Sheila: No, not yet. But then you don't know all about port—do you?

Birling (*noticing that his wife has not taken any*): Now then, Sybil, you must take a little to-night. Special occasion, y'know, eh?

Sheila: Yes, go on, Mummy. You must drink our health.

Mrs. Birling (*smiling*): Very well, then. Just a little, thank you.⁴ (*To Edna, who is about to go, with tray.*) All right, Edna. I'll ring from the drawing-room when we want coffee. Probably in about half an hour.

Edna (*going*): Yes, ma'am.

Edna goes out. *They now have all the glasses filled. Birling beams at them and clearly relaxes.*

Birling: Well, well—this is very nice. Very nice. Good dinner too, Sybil. Tell cook from me.

Gerald (*politely*): Absolutely first-class.

Mrs. Birling (*reproachfully*): Arthur, you're not supposed to say such things——⁵.

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1. Finchley 酒商名。
 2. governor 父亲的俗称。
 3. possessively: Sheila 已經和 Gerald 訂婚, 說話時帶着“你是我的”神氣。
 4. thank you (對 Birling 講)。
 5. Arthur, you're not supposed to say such things; Birling 是主人, 不宜当着 Gerald 的面稱贊家里請客的飯菜好。

Birling: Oh—come, come—I'm treating Gerald like one of the family. And I'm sure he won't object.

Sheila (*with mock aggressiveness*): Go on, Gerald—just you object!¹

Gerald (*smiling*): Wouldn't dream of it. In fact, I insist upon being one of the family now. I've been trying long enough, haven't I?² (*As she does not reply with more insistence.*) Haven't I? You know I have.

Mrs. Birling (*smiling*): Of course she does.

Sheila (*half serious, half playful*): Yes—except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you.

Gerald: And I've told you—I was awfully busy at the works all that time.

Sheila (*same tone as before*): Yes, that's what you say.

Mrs. Birling: Now, Sheila, don't tease him. When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.

Sheila: I don't believe I will. (*Half playful, half serious, to Gerald.*) So you be careful.

Gerald: Oh—I will, I will.

Eric suddenly guffaws. His parents look at him.

Sheila (*severely*): Now—what's the joke?

Eric: I don't know—really. Suddenly I felt I just had to laugh.

Sheila: You're squiffy.³

Eric: I'm not.

Mrs. Birling: What an expression, Sheila! Really, the

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1. (*with mock aggressiveness*) Go on, Gerald — just you object! (假意取闹) 来! Gerald —— 你就反对!
 2. I've been trying long enough 我一直在想办法成为 Birling 家的人 (指追求 Sheila)。
 3. You're squiffy 你有点灌糊涂了吧。

things you girls pick up these days!¹

Eric: If you think that's the best she can do——²

Shrila: Don't be an ass, Eric.

Mrs. Birling: Now stop it, you two. Arthur, what about this famous toast of yours?³

Birling: Yes, of course. (*Clears his throat.*) Well, Gerald, I know you agreed that we should only have this quiet little family party.⁴ It's a pity Sir George and—er—Lady Groft can't be with us, but they're abroad and so it can't be helped. As I told you, they sent me a very nice cable—couldn't be nicer. I'm not sorry that we're celebrating quietly like this——

Mrs. Birling: Much nicer really.

Gerald: I agree.

Birling: So do I, but it makes speech-making more difficult——

Eric (*not too rudely*): Well, don't do any. We'll drink their health and have done with it.

Birling: No, we won't. It's one of the happiest nights of my life. And one day, I hope, Eric, when you've a daughter of your own, you'll understand why. Gerald, I'm going to tell you frankly, without any pretences, that your engagement to Sheila means a tremendous lot to me. She'll make you happy, and I'm sure you'll make her happy. You're just the kind of son-in-law I always wanted. Your father and I have been

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1. the things you girls pick up these days 現在你們女孩子用的字眼真不像話。squiffy 是一个俗字。
 2. If you think that's the best she can do — 你別以为这是她最拿手的話（比这不像話的还有呢）。
 3. What about this famous toast of yours? 你的精采的祝酒詞怎么还不拿出来呀?（玩笑口气）
 4. I know you agreed that we should only have this quiet little family party ... 这一段以及下文說明：Gerald 的父母对这門亲事不很贊成，沒有回来参加訂婚仪式，因此 Birling 家也不便鋪張，只在家里庆祝一下。

friendly rivals in business for some time now — though Crofts¹ Limited are both older and bigger than Birling and Company — and now you've brought us together, and perhaps we may look forward to the time when Crofts and Birlings are no longer competing but are working together — for lower costs and higher prices.

Gerald: Hear, hear!² And I think my father would agree to that.

Mrs. Birling: Now, Arthur, I don't think you ought to talk business on an occasion like this.

Sheila: Neither do I. All wrong.

Birling: Quite so, I agree with you. I only mentioned it in passing. What I did want to say was — that Sheila's a lucky girl — and I think you're a pretty fortunate young man too, Gerald.

Gerald: I know I am — this once anyhow.

Birling (*raising his glass*): So here's wishing the pair of you — the very best that life can bring. Gerald and Sheila.

Mrs. Birling (*raising her glass, smiling*): Yes, Gerald. Yes Sheila darling. Our congratulations and very best wishes!

Gerald: Thank you.

Mrs. Birling: Eric!³

Eric (*rather noisily*): All the best! She's got a nasty temper sometimes — but she's not bad really. Good old Sheila!⁴

Sheila: Chump!⁵ I can't drink to this, can I? When do I drink?

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1. Crofts Limited: Croft 有限公司; Birling and Company: Birling 公司。两家本来是竞争的对手。
 2. Hear, hear! 对, 对。
 3. Eric! Eric 没有举杯祝酒 Birling 夫人因此叫他。
 4. She's got a nasty temper sometimes — but she's not bad really. Good old Sheila! 她有时候爱发脾气, 不过人到真不坏, 喝罢, 好 Sheila!
 5. Chump (俚) 傻瓜! Eric 祝酒时说俏皮话, Sheila 表示不能喝。

Gerald: You can drink to me.

Sheila (*quiet and serious now*): All right then. I drink to you, Gerald.

For a moment they look at each other.

Gerald (*quietly*): Thank you. And I drink to you—and hope I can make you as happy as you deserve to be.

Sheila (*trying to be light and easy*): You be careful—or I'll start weeping.¹

Gerald (*smiling*): Well, perhaps this will help to stop it. (*He produces a ring case.*)

Sheila (*excited*): Oh—Gerald—you've got it—is it the one you wanted me to have?

Gerald (*giving the case to her*): Yes—the very one.

Sheila (*taking out the ring*): Oh—it's wonderful! Look—Mummy—isn't it a beauty? Oh—darling—— (*She kisses Gerald hastily.*)

Eric: Steady the Buffs!²

Sheila (*who has put ring on, admiringly*): I think it's perfect. Now I really feel engaged.

Mrs. Birling: So you ought, darling. It's a lovely ring. Be careful with it.

Sheila: Careful! I'll never let it go out of my sight for an instant.

Mrs. Birling (*smiling*): Well, it came just at the right moment. That was clever of you, Gerald. Now, Arthur, if you've no more to say, I think Sheila and I had better go into the drawing-room and leave you men——

Birling (*rather heavily*): I just want to say this. (*Noticing that Sheila is still admiring her ring.*) Are you listening, Sheila? This concerns you too. And after all I don't often make speeches

1. You be careful — or I'll start weeping. Sheila 相当感动，故意轻松地說：你小心点儿，你要是再这么說，我就要哭了。
2. Steady the Buffs (俚) 这是一句在設盟起誓时說的話。犹如中文的“一言为定”之类。此处作“一吻为定”之类的意思解。

at you——

Sheila: I'm sorry, Daddy. Actually I was listening.

She looks attentive, as they all do. He holds them for a moment before continuing.

Birling: I'm delighted about this engagement and I hope it won't be too long before you're married. And I want to say this. There's a good deal of silly talk about these days¹—*but*—and I speak as a hard-headed business man, who has to take risks and know what he's about—I say, you can ignore all this silly pessimistic talk. When you marry, you'll be marrying at a very good time. Yes, a very good time—and soon it'll be an even better time. Last month, just because the miners came out on strike, there's a lot of wild talk about possible labour trouble in the near future. Don't worry. We've passed the worst of it. We employers at last are coming together to see that our interests—and the interests of Capital—are properly protected. And we're in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity.

Gerald: I believe you're right, sir.

Eric: What about war?

Birling: Glad you mentioned it, Eric. I'm coming to that. Just because the Kaiser² makes a speech or two, or a few German officers have too much to drink and begin talking nonsense, you'll hear some people say that war's inevitable. And to that I say—fiddlesticks!³ The Germans don't want war. Nobody wants war, except some half-civilised folks in the Balkans.⁴ And why? There's too much at stake these

1. There's a good deal of silly talk about these days... 目前外面流传着许多荒谬的说法...
2. the Kaiser 对德国皇帝的称呼。此处指第一次世界大战前德国皇帝威廉二世。
3. fiddlestick = nonsense
4. except some half-civilised folks in the Balkans 除了巴尔干半岛一些半开化的民族。指第一次世界大战前巴尔干半岛的 Serbia, Bulgaria 与 Rumania.

days.¹ Everything to lose and nothing to gain by war.

Eric: Yes, I know—but still——

Birling: Just let me finish, Eric. You've a lot to learn yet. And I'm talking as a hard-headed, practical man of business. And I say there isn't a chance of war. The world's developing so fast that it'll make war impossible. Look at the progress we're making. In a year or two we'll have aeroplanes that will be able to go anywhere. And look at the way the automobile's making headway—bigger and faster all the time. And then ships. Why, a friend of mine went over this new liner last week—the *Titanic*²—she sails next week—forty-six thousand eight hundred tons—forty-six thousand eight hundred tons—New York in five days—and every luxury—and unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable. That's what you've got to keep your eye on, facts like that, progress like that—and not a few German officers talking nonsense and a few scaremongers here making a fuss about nothing. Now you three young people, just listen to this—and remember what I'm telling you now. In twenty or thirty years time—let's say, in 1940—you may be giving a little party like this—your son or daughter, might be getting engaged—and I tell you, by that time you'll be living in a world that'll have forgotten all these Capital versus Labour agitations³ and all these silly little war scares. There'll be peace and prosperity and rapid progress everywhere—except of course in Russia, which will always be behindhand naturally.

Mrs. Birling: Arthur!

As Mrs. Birling shows signs of interrupting.

Birling: Yes, my dear, I know—I'm talking too much. But you youngsters just remember what I said. We can't let

1. And why? There's too much at stake these days.

接上文：为什么人們不要打仗呢？現在打起來就會遭到很大損失。at stake = risked.

2. Titanic 号是当时号称世界最大的郵船。它在从倫敦到紐約的第一次航行中，觸冰而沉沒。

3. Capital versus Labour agitations 关于勞資对立的煽惑言論。

these Bernard Shaws and H. G. Wellses do all the talking.¹ We hard-headed practical business men must say something sometime. And we don't guess—we've had experience—and *we know*.

Mrs. Birling (*rising. The others rise*): Yes, of course, dear. Well—don't keep Gerald in here too long. Eric—I want you a minute.²

She and Sheila and Eric go out. Birling and Gerald sit down again.

Birling: Cigar?

Gerald: No, thanks. Can't really enjoy them.

Birling (*taking one himself*): Ah, you don't know what you're missing. I like a good cigar. (*Indicating decanter*). Help yourself.

Gerald: Thank you.

Birling lights his cigar and Gerald, who has lit a cigarette, helps himself to port then pushes decanter to Birling.

Birling: Thanks. (*Confidentially*). By the way, there's something I'd like to mention—in strict confidence—while we're by ourselves. I have an idea that your mother—Lady Croft—while she doesn't object to my girl—feels you might have done better for yourself socially——

Gerald, rather embarrassed, begins to murmur some dissent, but Birling checks him.

No, Gerald, that's all right. Don't blame her. She comes from an old county family—landed people and so forth³—and

1. We can't let these Bernard Shaws and H. G. Wellses do all the talking 我們不能盡讓……之流的人去說話。Bernard Shaw 蕭伯納，英國戲劇家，改良主義的“費邊社”創始人之一。H. G. Wells 威爾斯，英國歷史家暨小說家。他們在當時資產階級文人中是比較進步的。

2. I want you a minute 你出來一會兒。

3. She comes from an old county family — landed people and so forth 指 Gerald 的母親是地主鄉紳出身，瞧不起 Birling 這樣的暴发戶。

so it's only natural. But what I wanted to say is—there's a fair chance that I might find my way into the next Honours List. Just a knighthood, of course.¹

Gerald: Oh—I say—congratulations!

Birling: Thanks. But it's a bit too early for that. So don't say anything. But I've had a hint or two. You see, I was Lord Mayor here two years ago when Royalty visited us.² And I've always been regarded as a sound useful party man.³ So—well—I gather there's a very good chance of a knighthood—so long as we behave ourselves, don't get into the police court or start a scandal—eh?⁴ (*Laughs complacently.*)

Gerald (*laughs:*): You seem to be a nice well-behaved family——⁵

Birling: We think we are——

Gerald: So if that's the only obstacle, sir, I think you might as well accept my congratulations now.

Birling: No, no, I couldn't do that. And don't say anything yet.

Gerald: Not even to my mother? I know she'd be delighted.

1. There's a fair chance ... 我很有可能名列下一次的封誥单。当然只是封个爵士罢了。Honours List 指英国国王封贈貴族的名单。一些有财产，替統治阶级出过力的所谓“名流”，也可以晋封为“爵士”(knight)，被封的人获得 Sir 的头銜。但这只是个空头銜，并不就是貴族。
2. I was Lord Mayor here two years ago when Royalty visited us 两年前皇室来訪問的时候，我是这里的市长。Royalty 指皇亲国戚。
3. A sound useful party man 在党里人家一直认为我是有头脑能頂事的人。
4. So long as we behave ourselves... 只要我們規規矩矩，不給警察抓去或上法庭，或者出件不体面的事。（这是一句玩笑話，意思是指自己家里决不会出这些事）
5. You seem to be a nice well-behaved family — 你們看起来是規規矩矩的好人家（这也是一句湊趣的話）。

Birling: Well, when she comes back, you might drop a hint to her. And you can promise her that we'll try to keep out of trouble during the next few months.¹

They both laugh.

Eric enters.

Eric: What's the joke? Started telling stories?

Birling: No. Want another glass of port?

Eric (*sitting down*): Yes, please. (*Takes decanter and helps himself.*) Mother says we mustn't stay too long. But I don't think it matters. I left 'em talking about clothes again. You'd think a girl had never had any clothes before she gets married. Women are potty about 'em.²

Birling: Yes, but you've got to remember, my boy, that clothes mean something quite different to a woman. Not just something to wear — and not only something to make 'em look prettier—but—well, a sort of sign or token of their self-respect.

Gerald: That's true.

Eric (*eagerly*): Yes, I remember—(*but he checks himself.*)

Birling: Well, what do you remember?

Eric (*confused*): Nothing.

Birling: Nothing?

Gerald (*amused*): Sounds a bit fishy to me.³

Birling (*taking it in same manner*): Yes, you don't know what some of these boys get up to nowadays.⁴ More money to spend and time to spare than I had when I was Eric's age. They worked us hard in those days and kept us short of

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1. And you can promise her ... 你可以告訴你母親以後幾個月里我們會小小心心不出亂子（這也是一句玩笑話）。
 2. Women are potty about them. 女人對衣服真是瑣碎計較得利害。
 3. Sounds a bit fishy to me. 听起来这里面有些文章。fishy = questionable
 4. You don't know what some of these boys get up to nowadays. 這年頭你簡單摸不透小伙子們在搞什麼花樣。

cash.¹ Though even then—we broke out and had a bit of fun sometimes.²

Gerald: I'll bet you did.³

Birling (*solemnly*): But this is the point.⁴ I don't want to lecture you two young fellows again. But what so many of you don't seem to understand now, when things are so much easier, is that a man has to make his own way—has to look after himself—and his family too, of course, when he has one—and so long as he does that he won't come to much harm. But the way some of these cranks⁵ talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive—community and all that nonsense.⁶ But take my word for it, you youngsters—and I've learnt in the good hard school of experience—that a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own—and —

We hear the sharp ring of a front door bell. Birling stops to listen.

Eric: Somebody at the front door.

Birling: Edna'll answer it. Well, have another glass of port, Gerald—and then we'll join the ladies. That'll stop me giving you good advice.

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1. They worked us hard in those days and kept us short of cash
那時我們拼命干活，手头也沒有錢花。
 2. We broke out and had a bit of fun sometimes 我們有时候还是想办法出去开开心。
 3. I'll bet you did 我敢打賭你一定这么干过。
 4. But this is the point. 以下 Birling 发表議論，认为男人只要自己找前途，管自己的事，照顧好家庭，那就不会有什么問題。
 5. cranks 发表怪論的人物。指例如前文提到的 Bernard Shaw 或 H. G. Wells.
 6. as if we were all mixed up ... 仿佛我們都像一窩蜜蜂一样混在一起，——什么社会啦，等等胡扯。

Eric: Yes, you've piled it on a bit to-night,¹ Father.

Birling: Special occasion. And feeling contented, for once, I wanted you to have the benefit of my experience.

Edna enters.

Edna: Please, sir, an inspector's called.

Birling: An inspector? What kind of inspector?

Edna: A police inspector. He says his name's Inspector Goole.

Birling: Don't know him. Does he want to see me?

Edna: Yes, sir. He says it's important.

Birling: All right, Edna. Show him in here. Give us some more light.

Edna does, then goes out.

I'm still on the Bench.² It may be something about a warrant.

Gerald (*lightly*): Sure to be. Unless Eric's been up to something. (*Nodding confidentially to Birling.*) And that would be awkward, wouldn't it?

Birling (*humorously*): Very.

Eric (*who is uneasy, sharply*): Here, what do you mean?

Gerald (*lightly*): Only something we were talking about when you were out. A joke really.

Eric (*still uneasy*): Well, I don't think it's very funny.

Birling (*sharply, staring at him*): What's the matter with you?

Eric (*defiantly*): Nothing.

Edna (*opening door, and announcing*): Inspector Goole.

The Inspector enters, and Edna goes, closing door after her. The Inspector need not be a big man but he creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and pur-

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1. You've piled it on a bit to-night 今天晚上你給了我們一大堆忠告了。
 2. I'm still on the Bench 我現在還在法院擔任推事。to be on the Bench = 當 magistrate 指法院的列席推事。warrant. 逮捕証。

posefulness.¹ He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit of the period. He speaks carefully, weightily, and has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking.

Inspector: Mr. Birling?

Birling: Yes. Sit down, Inspector.

Inspector (sitting): Thank you, sir.

Birling: Have a glass of port—or a little whisky?

Inspector: No, thank you, Mr. Birling. I'm on duty.²

Birling: You're new, aren't you?

Inspector: Yes, sir. Only recently transferred.

Birling: I thought you must be. I was an alderman³ for years—and Lord Mayor two years ago—and I'm still on the Bench—so I know the Brumley police officers⁴ pretty well—and I thought I'd never seen you before.

Inspector: Quite so.

Birling: Well, what can I do for you? Some trouble about a warrant?

Inspector: No, Mr. Birling.

Birling (after a pause, with a touch of impatience): Well, what is it then?

Inspector: I'd like some information, if you don't mind, Mr. Birling. Two hours ago a young woman died in the Infirmary. She'd been taken there this afternoon because she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant.⁵ Burnt her inside out, of course.

1. The inspector need not be a big man... 探长不必一定是一个又高又大的人，但是他使人一見就有魁梧，健壯，結实的印象，而且感到他是有所为而来。

2. I'm on duty. 警察局人員在执行职务时，不准喝酒。

3. alderman 市參議員

4. Brumley Police officers Brumley 是 Birling 家所在的那个地区。

5. strong disinfectant 厉害的杀菌剂，以致內脏都腐蝕了 (burnt her inside out)。

Eric (*involuntarily*): My God!

Inspector: Yes, she was in great agony. They did everything they could for her at the Infirmary; but she died. Suicide of course.¹

Birling (*rather impatiently*): Yes yes. Horrible business. But I don't understand why you should come here, Inspector——

Inspector (*cutting through, massively*): I've been round to the room she had, and she'd left a letter there and a sort of diary. Like a lot of these young women who get into various kinds of trouble, she'd used more than one name. But her original name—her real name—was Eva Smith.

Birling (*thoughtfully*): Eva Smith?

Inspector: Do you remember her, Mr. Birling?

Birling (*slowly*): No—I seem to remember hearing that name—Eva Smith—somewhere. But it doesn't convey anything to me. And I don't see where I come into this.²

Inspector: She was employed in your works at one time.

Birling: Oh—that's it, is it? Well, we've several hundred young women there, y'know, and they keep changing.

Inspector: This young woman, Eva Smith, was a bit out of the ordinary. I found a photograph of her in her lodgings. Perhaps you'd remember her from that.

Inspector takes a photograph, about postcard size, out of his pocket and goes to Birling. Both Gerald and Eric rise to have a look at the photograph, but the Inspector interposes himself between them and the photograph. They are surprised and rather annoyed. Birling stares hard, and with recognition, at the photograph, which the Inspector then replaces in his pocket.

Gerald (*showing annoyance*): Any particular reason why I shouldn't see this girl's photograph, Inspector?

Inspector (*coolly, looking hard at him*): There might be.

1. Suicide of course. 当然她是自杀死的。
2. I don't see where I come into this. 我看不出我跟这事有什么牵连。