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**CDS English Department Key Scenes for ‘ELSEWHERE’**

**AIC ELSEWHERES Act 1 Scene 1 – Birling’s after dinner speech**

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 days – 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 kaiser makes a speech or two, or a few german officers have too much to drink and begin taking nonsense, you'll hear some people say that war's inevitable. And to that I say – fiddlesticks! **The germans don't want war. Nobody wants war**, except some half-civilized folks in the Balkans. And why? There's too much at stake these days. 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 taking 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 auto-mobile'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 – she sails next week – 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 taking 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 year's 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 agitations 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 these Bernard Shaws and H.G.Wellses do all the talking. We hard-headed practical business men must say something sometime. **And we don't guess – we've had experience - and we know.**

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A BIT LATER (when the women have gone and the men get out the PORT and CIGARS he tells ERIC and GERALD)

Birling: (*solemnly*) But this is the point. 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 cranks 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.** 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 door bell.*** *Birling stops to listen*).

[note that the INSPECTOR arrives, just as he says this!]

**AIC ELSEWHERES – GERALD QUESTIONED**

Gerald: (*steadily* ) I discovered, not that night but two nights later, when we met again – not accidentally this time of course - 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 […] had let me have the key of a nice little set of rooms he had So I insisted on Daisy moving into those rooms and I made her take some money to keep her going there. (*carefully, to the inspector*.) I want you to understand that I didn't install her there so that I could make love to her. […] 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.

Sheila: yes, but why are you saying that to him? You ought to be saying it to me,

Gerald: I suppose I ought really. I'm sorry, Sheila. Somehow I--

Sheila: (*cutting in, as he hesitates*) I know. Somehow he makes you.

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. Were you in love with her?

Sheila: just what I was going to ask!

Birling: (*angrily*) I really must protest--

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: Yes, and it was I who had the girl turned out of her job at Milwards. And I'm supposed to be engaged to Gerald. And I'm not a child, don't forget. I've a right to know. Were you in love with her, Gerlad?

Gerald: (*hesitatingly*) it's hard to say. I didn't feel about her as she felt about me.

Sheila: (*with sharp sarcasm*) of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald.

Gerald: All right – I did for a time. 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 go and 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.

**AIC ELSEWHERES – END OF MRS BIRLING’S QUESTIONED**

Mrs Birling: First, she called herself Mrs Birling-- I think it was simply a piece of gross impertinence – quite deliberate – and naturally that was one of the things that prejudiced me against her case.

Birling: And I should think so! Damned impudence!

Inspector: you admit being prejudiced against her case?

Mrs Birling: Yes.

Sheila: mother, she's just died a horrible death – don't forget.

Mrs Birling: I'm very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame…

Mrs Birling: … I'd refused to believe her original story – that she was a married woman who'd been deserted by her husband. I didn't see any reason to believe that one story should be any truer than the other. Therefore, you're quite wrong to suppose I shall regret what I did.

Inspector: But if her story was true, if this boy had been giving her stolen money, then she came to you for help because she wanted to keep this youngster out of any more trouble?

Mrs Birling: Possibly. But it sounded ridiculous to me. So I was perfectly justified in advising my committee not to allow her claim for assistance.

Inspector: You're not even sorry now, when you know what happened to the girl?

Mrs Birling: I'm sorry she came to such a horrible end. But I accept no blame at all.

Inspector: Who is to blame then?

Mrs Birling: First, the girl herself.

Sheila: (*bitterly*) For letting father and me have her chucked out of her jobs!

Mrs Birling: Secondly, I blame the young man who was the father of the child she was going to have. If, as she said, he didn't belong to her class, and was some drunken young idler, then that's all the more reason why he shouldn't escape. He should be made an example of. If the girl's death is due to anybody, then it's due to him.

Inspector: and if her story id true – that he was stealing money-

Mrs Birling: (*rather agitated now*) there's no point in assuming that-

Inspector: but suppose we do, what then?

Mrs Birling: Then he'd be entirely responsible – because the girl wouldn't have come to us, and have been refused assistance, if it hadn't been for him-

Inspector: So he's the chief culprit anyhow.

Mrs Birling: Certainly. And he ought to be dealt with very severely-

Sheila: (*with sudden alarm*) Mother – stop – stop!

Birling: Be quiet, Sheila!

Sheila: But don't you see-

Mrs Birling: (*severely*) you're behaving like an hysterical child tonight. (Sheila *begins crying quietly.* Mrs Birling *turns to the* Inspector) and if you'd take some steps to find this young man and then make sure that he's compelled to confess in public his responsibility – instead of staying here asking quite unnecessary questions – then you really would be doing your duty.

**AIC ELSEWHERES – END OF ERIC BEING QUESTIONED**

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*.)

Eric: 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.

Eric: (*nearly at breaking point*) Then – you killed her. She came to you to protect me – and you turned her away – yes, and you killed her – and the child she'd have had too – my child – your own grandchild – you killed them both – damn you, damn you-

Mrs Birling: (*very distressed now*) No – Eric – please – I didn't know – I didn't understand-

Eric: (*almost threatening her*) You don't understand anything. You never did. You never even tried – you -

Sheila: (*frightened*) Eric, don't – don't-

Birling: (*furious, intervening*) Why, you hysterical young fool – get back – or I'll-

**AIC ELSEWHERES – INSPECTOR LEAVES**

Inspector: ( *taking charge, masterfully*) Stop!

*They are suddenly quiet, staring at him*.

Inspector: And be quiet for a moment and listen to me. I don't need to know any more. Neither do you. This girl killed herself – and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. (*He looks from one to the other of them carefully*.) But then I don't think you ever will. Remember what you did, Mrs Birling. You turned her away when she most needed help. You refused her even the pitiable little bit of organized charity you had in your power to grant her. Remember what you did-

Eric: (*unhappily*) My God – I'm not likely to forget.

Inspector: Just used her for the end of a stupid drunken evening, as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person. No, you won't forget. (*He looks at Sheila*.)

Sheila: (*bitterly*) I know. I had her turned out of a job. I started it.

Inspector: You helped – but you didn't start it.( *rather savagely, to Birling*.) You started it. She wanted twenty-five shillings a week instead of twenty-two and sixpence. You made her pay a heavy price for that. And now she'll make you pay a heavier price still.

Birling: ( *unhappily*) Look, Inspector – I'd give thousands – yes, thousands-

Inspector: You're offering the money at the wrong time. Mr Birling. (*He makes a move as if concluding the session, possibly shutting up notebook, etc. Then surveys them sardonically*.) No, I don't think any of you will forget. Nor that young man, Croft, though he at least had some affection for her and made her happy for a time. Well, Eva Smith's gone. You can't do her any more harm. And you can't do her any good now, either. You can't even say “I'm sorry, Eva Smith.”

Sheila: (*who is crying quietly*) That's the worst of it.

Inspector: But just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they well be taught it in fire and bloody and anguish. Good night.

(*He walks straight out, leaving them staring, subdued and wondering. Sheila is still quietly crying. Mrs Birling has collapsed into a chair. Eric is brooding desperately. Birling, the only active one, hears the front door slam, moves hesitatingly towards the door, stops, looks gloomily at the other three, then pours himself out a drink, which he hastily swallows*.)

Birling: (*angrily to Eric*) You're the one I blame for this.

Eric: I'll bet I am.

**AIC ELSEWHERES – THE END**

Birling: (*jovially*) But the whole thing's different now. Come, come, you can see that, can't you? *(Imitating Inspector in his final speech.)* You all helped to kill her. *(pointing at Sheila and Eric, and laughing.)* and I wish you could have seen the look on your faces when he said that.

( *Sheila moves towards door)* Going to bed, young woman?

Sheila: (*tensely*) I want to get out of this. It frightens me the way you talk.

Birling: (*heartily*) Nonsense! You'll have a good laugh over it yet. Look, you'd better ask Gerald for that ring you gave back to him, hadn't you? Then you'll feel better.

Sheila: *(passionately)* You're pretending everything's just as it was before.

Eric: I'm not!

Sheila: No, but these others are.

Birling: Well, isn't it? We've been had, that's all.

Sheila: So nothing really happened. So there's nothing to be sorry for, nothing to learn. We can all go on behaving just as we did.

Mrs Birling: Well, why shouldn't we?

Sheila: I tell you – whoever that Inspector was, it was anything but a joke. You knew it then. You began to learn something. And now you've stopped. You're ready to go on in the same old way.

Birling: *(amused)* And you're not, eh?

Sheila: No, because I remember what he said, how he looked, and what he made me feel. Fire and blood and anguish. And it frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it.

Eric: And I agree with Sheila. It frightens me too.

Birling: Well, go to bed then, and don't stand there being hysterical.

Mrs Birling: They're over-tired. In the morning they'll be as amused as we are.

Gerald: Everything's all right now, Sheila. *(Holds up the ring.)* What about this ring?

Sheila: No, not yet. It's too soon. I must think.

Birling: *(pointing to Eric and Sheila)* Now look at the pair of them – the famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke-(*The telephone rings sharply. There is a moment's complete silence. Birling goes to answer it.)* Yes?. . . .Mr Birling speaking. . . .What? - here- (*But obviously the other person has rung off. He puts the telephone down slowly and looks in a panic stricken fashion at the others).* That was the police. A girl has just died – on her way to the Infirmary – after swallowing some disinfectant. And a police inspector is on his way here – to ask some – questions -( *As they stare guiltily and dumbfounded, the curtain falls).*