(20 points) Read the following passage carefully. Then, write a well-organized essay analyzing the contrast between the serious and the trivial, or consequence and inconsequence, in the scene. What techniques does Priestley use to create this dramatic tension? You might consider devices such as irony, juxtaposition, word choice, and gestures. How are the techniques used, and to what effect?

MRS BIRLING. (smiling) And I must say, Gerald, you've argued this very cleverly, and I'm most grateful.
GERALD. (going for his drink) Well, you see, while I was out of the house I'd time to cool off and think things out a little.
BIRLING. (giving him a drink) Yes, he didn't keep you on the run as he did the rest of us. I'll admit now he gave me a bit of a scare at the time. But I'd a special reason for not wanting any public scandal just now. (Has his drink now, and raises his glass.) Well, here's to us. Come on, Sheila, don't look like that. All over now.
SHEILA. The worst part is. But you're forgetting one thing I still can't forget. Everything we said had happened really had happened. If it didn't end tragically, then that's lucky for us. But it might have done.
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 the 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!
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