

Pygmalion Now
by
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
Adaptation by Doug Zschiegner

PYGMALION NOW

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PYGMALION NOW

PLACE/TIME

London...something like today

CHARACTERS. 5 M 6 F

Eliza Doolittle	F	<i>Rawandan</i>
Professor Henry Higgins	M	
Colonel Pickering	M	
Mrs. Higgins/Street Person #1	F	
Anitha P. Doolittle/Street Per. #2	F	<i>Rawandan</i>
Mrs. Pierce/Street Person #3	F	
Mrs. Eynsford Hill	F	
Clara Eynsford Hill	F	
Freddy Eynsford Hill	M	
The Bystander/Studio Assistant #1	M	
The Sarcastic Bystander/Studio Assistant #2	M	

ADAPTATION:

Adapted from the 1913 original edition, with later preface and epilogue, but without the film adaptations. This work is available for countries where copy-right is Life +50 or in the USA (published before 1923). Shaw, George Bernard. *Pygmalion*. 1913. Gutenberg Press E Book, www.gutenberg.org/etext3825

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PRODUCTION CHALLENGES:

- How to make a play written in 1912 -- and then adapted and made hugely popular with a very different focus -- resonate as contemporary theatre?
- Which aspects of the original political/social climate ring true today and which don't?
- How do Shaw's points change when race and nationality are introduced?
- Can the Edwardian language be tweaked so it sounds contemporary – while still retaining the range of education styles and Shawian wit?
- Will Shaw's insistence on making characters both flawed and noble be accepted today?
- Can Shaw's wicked balance of humor and aggressive -- even shocking -- social commentary be retained?

Research Packet and Rwandan Dialect Booklet with recordings available on request.

Developed and Premiered with the Students of Niagara University Theatre, 2015.

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

Covent Garden at 11:15 p.m. Thunder and lighting. Heavy summer rain. Honking and frantic taxi whistles. People running up and down the street looking for cabs and shelter. Under the portico of St. Paul's Church, framed in an arch and facing away, is a shabbily dressed girl with a garbage bag lined pickle bucket full of plastic-wrapped flowers. After a few failed attempts at selling, she disappears, as folk run under the portico to escape the rain. Most appear homeless, but contrasting them is MRS. EYNSFORD HILL, and her daughter CLARA, formally dressed and carrying programs from a West End musical. They all peer out at the rain, except a man turned away, scribbling with a stylus on his iPad. The church clock strikes once.

CLARA. I'm freezing! What can Freddy be doing all this time? He's been gone twenty minutes.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Not that long. But he ought to have got us a cab by now.

THE BYSTANDER. He won't get no cab, not until eleven-thirty, missus, when they come back after dropping their theatre fares.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. But we must have a cab. We can't stand here until eleven-thirty. It's too bad.

THE BYSTANDER. Well, it ain't my fault, missus.

CLARA. If Freddy had a bit of gumption, he would have got one at the theatre door.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. What could he have done, poor boy?

CLARA. Other people got cabs. Why couldn't he? (*FREDDY EYNSFORD HILL rushes in out of the rain closing a dripping umbrella and checking a cell phone. He's twenty and well-dressed.*)

CLARA. Well, haven't you got a cab?

FREDDY. There's none to be had for love or money.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Oh, Freddy, there must be one. You can't have

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tried.

CLARA. You're exhausting. Do you expect us to get one ourselves?

FREDDY. I tell you they're all engaged. The rain was so sudden and everybody had to take a cab.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Did you try Uber?

FREDDY. There wasn't one on Uber.

CLARA. Did you try Lyft?

FREDDY. There wasn't one on Lyft and I walked as far as Leister Square¹ trying to hail one.

CLARA. You haven't tried at all.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. You really are very helpless, Freddy. Go again and don't come back until you have found a cab.

FREDDY. I'll get soaked for nothing.

CLARA. And what about us? Do you want us to stay here all night in the cold, with next to nothing on. You selfish sod --

FREDDY. Oh, very well, I'll go, I'll go. *(He checks his phone and dashes off, colliding with the homeless girl who's hurrying back in. The flower bucket flies out of her hands. Lightning and thunder.)*

ELIZA. *(In a pronounced African accent.)* Now then, Freddy, look where you're going dear!

FREDDY. Sorry *(He rushes off.)*

ELIZA. *(Picking up her scattered flowers.)* There's manners for you! Two bunches of flowers ruined. *(She sits by a column, sorting her flowers. She's nineteen and her clothes appear to be scavenged and worn out. She's probably as clean as she can afford to be, but compared to the ladies, she's very dirty. She's fluent in English, though not formally educated.)*

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. How do you know my son's name is Freddy?

ELIZA. Oh, he's your son is he? Well, if you done your job as his mother, he'd know better than to ruin a poor girl's flowers then run away without paying. Will you pay me for them?

CLARA. Don't you dare, Mother. The idea!

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Please allow me, Clara. Have you any

¹ Leister Square: *pronounced 'LES-ter' -- several blocks from Covent Garden*

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change?

CLARA. No. I've nothing smaller than a tenner.²

ELIZA. I can give you change for a tenner, kind lady.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Give it to me. *(Clara gives it up reluctantly.)*

Now this is for your flowers.

ELIZA. Thank you kindly, lady.

CLARA. Make her give you the change. These things are only three quid³ a bunch.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. Do hold your tongue, Clara. *(To the girl.)* You can keep the change.

ELIZA. Oh, thank you, lady.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Now tell me how you know that young man's name.

ELIZA. I didn't.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. I heard you call him by it. Don't try to fool me.

ELIZA. Who's trying to fool you? I called him Freddy or Charlie same as you would if you was talking to a stranger and wanted to be pleasant. *(She sits by her bucket.)*

CLARA. Seven pounds⁴ thrown away! Really, mamma, you might have spared Freddy that. *(She retreats. COLONEL PICKERING, an amiable gentleman in a British officer's uniform and raincoat, rushes in for shelter, closing a dripping umbrella.)*

PICKERING. Phew!

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. *(To Pickering.)* Oh, sir, is there any sign of it stopping?

PICKERING. I'm afraid not. It started worse than ever about two minutes ago. *(He turns down his pant legs.)*

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Oh, dear! *(She joins her daughter.)*

ELIZA. If it's worse, it's a sign it's nearly over, so cheer up, Captain and buy a flower off a poor girl.

PICKERING. I'm sorry, I haven't any change.

² tenner: a ten-pound note = \$13.23

³ quid: slang for pound, 3 quid = \$ 3.97

⁴ seven pounds = \$9.26

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ELIZA. I can give you change, Captain?

PICKERING. For a fifty-pound note?⁵ I've nothing less.

ELIZA. Go on! Oh, do buy a flower off me, Captain.

PICKERING. Now don't be troublesome, there's a good girl. (*Trying his pockets.*) I really haven't any change -- Stop. Here's two quid,⁶ if that's any use to you (*He retreats to another pillar.*)

ELIZA. (*Disappointed, but...*) Thank you, sir.

THE BYSTANDER. (*To the girl.*) You be careful. Give him a flower for it. There's a bloke behind here taking down every damned word you're saying. (*All turn to the man.*)

ELIZA. (*Springing up.*) I ain't done nothing wrong by speaking to the man. I've a right to sell flowers if I keep out of the street. I'm respectable, so help me. I never spoke to him except to ask him to buy a flower.

(*The crowd has opinions, mostly sympathetic to Eliza.*)

BYSTANDERS & STREET PEOPLE. (*At once.*) Don't start hollerin. Who's hurting you? Nobody's going to touch you. What's the good of hollering? Take it easy. Easy, easy, etc., What's the big deal? What she do? Where is he? A detective taking her down. What! him? Yes, him over there! Took money off the man, etc.

ELIZA. (*Breaking through to Pickering.*) Oh, sir, don't let him charge me. You don't know what it means. They'll deport me for assaulting a man. They—

HIGGINS. (*Coming forward.*) There, there, there, there! Who's hurting you, silly girl? What do you take me for?

THE BYSTANDER. It's all right, he's not police: look at his boots. (*To Higgins.*) She thought you was a cop's nark, sir.

HIGGINS. (*Interested.*) What's a cop's nark?

THE BYSTANDER. It's a--well, it's a cop's nark, as you might say. What else would you call it? A sort of informer.

ELIZA. I take my Bible oath I never said a word—

HIGGINS. Oh, shut up, shut up. Do I look like a policeman?

ELIZA. Then what did you take down my words for? How do I know whether you took me down right? You just show me what you wrote about

⁵ fifty-pound note: *a bill* = \$66.15

⁶ two quid: *a coin worth 2 pound* = \$2.65

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me. (*Higgins presents his iPad, with the crowd looking over his shoulder.*)
What's that? That ain't proper writing. I can't read that.

HIGGINS. I can. (*Reproducing her pronunciation.*) 'Cheer up, Captain and buy a flower off a poor girl.' (*He taps the screen, her recorded voice plays.*)

ELIZA. It's because I called him Captain. I meant no harm. (*To Pickering.*) Oh, sir, witwa nde? (*Rwandan for 'what's your name?'*) Don't let him charge me for a word like that. You—

PICKERING. Charge! I'm not making a charge. (*To Higgins.*) Really, sir, if you're a detective, you need not protect me against assault by young women until I ask. Anybody could see the girl meant no harm.

THE BYSTANDERS & STREET PEOPLE. (*Against police brutality, maybe some record this on cells.*) Course they could. What business is it of yours? You mind your own business. He should be arrested, he should. Taking down people's words! Girl never said a word to him. What's the matter if she did? Nice thing a girl can't get out of the rain without being insulted, etc., etc., etc.

THE BYSTANDER. He ain't a cop. He's a damn Nosey Parker, that's what he is. I tell you, look at his boots.

HIGGINS. (*Turning on him.*) And how are all your people down at Hackney?

THE BYSTANDER. Who told you my people come from Hackney?

HIGGINS. Never mind, they did. (*To the girl.*) How do you happen to be up so far east? You were born in Rwanda, but have been living in Camden for at least ten years.

ELIZA. Oh, what harm is there in my leaving Rwanda? My life wasn't fit for a pig there. And Camden's the only shelter around here that will take me when the weather's bad... (*With hurt and anger.*) Oh,--hoo--oo--

HIGGINS. Live where you like, but stop that noise.

PICKERING. (*To the girl.*) Come, come! He can't touch you. You have a right to live where you please.

A SARCASTIC BYSTANDER. (*Pushing in.*) Islington, for instance. I'd like to go into the housing crisis with you, I would.

ELIZA. I'm a good girl, I am.

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER. Do you know where I come from?

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HIGGINS. *(Promptly.)* Greenwich. *(The crowd snickers.)*

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER. Well, who said I didn't? Crikey, you know everything, you do.

ELIZA. Vuga buhoro buhoro! Mbabarira, ihangane. *(‘Please speak more slowly. Sorry, sorry.’)*

THE BYSTANDER. Don't you stand it from him. *(To Higgins.)* See here. What right do you have to know about people that never meddled with you? Where's your warrant?

STREET PEOPLE. Yes, where's your warrant? etc.

ELIZA. Let him say what he likes. I don't want no traffic with him.

THE BYSTANDER. You take us for dirt under your feet, don't you? Catch you talking that way to a professional!

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER. *(Singling out Pickering.)* Yes, tell him where he come from if you want to go fortune-telling.

HIGGINS. Cheltenham, Harrow, Cambridge and...Afghanistan.

PICKERING. Quite right.

BYSTANDERS & STREET PEOPLE. *(Laughter, reaction in Higgins's favor.)* He knows all about it. Told him off. Put him in his place! Hear him tell him where he come from? etc.

PICKERING. May I ask, sir, do you do this for your living at a fair ground?

HIGGINS. I've thought of that. Maybe I will someday. *(The rain has stopped. The crowd begins to drift off.)*

ELIZA. He ain't got no right to disrespect a woman trying to earn her keep.

CLARA. *(Pushing through.)* What on earth is Freddy doing? I'll get pneumonia if I stay in this cold any longer.

HIGGINS. *(Making a note.)* Kensington.

CLARA. Will you please keep your rude remarks to yourself?

HIGGINS. Did I say that out loud? I beg your pardon. Your mother's Epsom, unmistakably.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. How very curious! I was brought up near Epsom, in Largetady Park.

HIGGINS. Ha! ha! That's a hell of a name! Excuse me. *(To Clara.)* You want a cab, do you?

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CLARA. Don't dare speak to me.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Oh, please, please Clara. We should be grateful to you, sir, if you found us a cab. (*Higgins produces a whistle.*) Oh, thank you. (*Higgins blows a piercing blast.*)

ELIZA. (*Preoccupied.*) He's got no right to take away my character. My character is the same to me as anyone's.

HIGGINS. I don't know whether you've noticed it, but the rain stopped two minutes ago.

THE BYSTANDER. So it has. Why didn't you say so before? And us wasting our time listening to your bull. (*He walks off.*)

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER. I can tell where you come from. You come from Anwell Insane Asylum. Go back there.

HIGGINS. (*Helpfully.*) Hanwell.

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER. (*Imitating fancy speech.*) Thank you, teacher. Haw haw! So long. (*He taps his hat and strolls off.*)

ELIZA. Just cause I can't talk all posh like him! How would he like that treatment himself?

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. It's quite fine now, Clara. We can walk to the tube station. Come on. (*She hurries off.*)

CLARA. But the cab--- Oh, how exhausting! (*She follows. Higgins and Pickering are left with Eliza, who arranges her bucket, sneezing and murmuring*)

ELIZA. If I didn't have my head on I'd...hamagara polisi! ('...call the police.')

PICKERING. (*Returning to Higgins.*) How do you do it, if I may ask?

HIGGINS. Simple phonetics. The science of speech. That's my profession. Also, my hobby. Happy is the man who can make a living off his hobby! You can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshireman by his brogue. I can place any man within six miles. I can place him within two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets.

ELIZA. Ought to be ashamed of himself, the cheeky monkey!

PICKERING. But is there a living in that these days?

HIGGINS. Oh yes. Quite a fat one. This is an age of Starts Ups. Men

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begin in Greenwich with twenty thousand⁷ a year and end up CEO's in Kensington with a hundred grand. They want to drop Greenwich, but they give themselves away every time they open their mouths. Once I've taught them—

ELIZA. If I thought I could get away with sassing back to a toff like that—

HIGGINS. (*Explosively.*) Woman, stop this detestable muttering or else seek the shelter of some other place of worship!

ELIZA. I've a right to be here if I like, same as you.

HIGGINS. A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live. Remember that you're a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech. You've chosen to speak English: the language of Shakespeare and Milton and The Bible. Don't sit crooning like a nauseated pigeon.

ELIZA. (*Wonder, fear and hatred.*) Ah—ah—ah—ow—ow—oo!

HIGGINS. Heavens! What a sound! (*He repeats and writes.*) Ah—ah—ah—ow—ow—ow—oo!

ELIZA. (*Enjoying it.*) Go on!

HIGGINS. You see this specimen with her uneducated, immigrant English, the English that will keep her in the street until the day she dies? Well, sir, in six months I could pass her off as an executive at an ambassador's dinner party. I could even get her a job as a secretary or sales girl, which requires better English. That's the sort of thing I do for commercial billionaires - linguistic makeovers. 'Speaking well' may be old fashioned in this multi-cultural world, but it's the best way to improve your image without plastic surgery. Good speech is money in the bank! And with the profits, I do genuine scientific work in phonetics. And write a respected poetry blog.

PICKERING. I myself am a student of Afghan dialects and --

HIGGINS. Are you? Do you know Colonel Pickering, the author of Spoken Sanskrit?

PICKERING. I am Colonel Pickering. Who are you?

HIGGINS. Henry Higgins, author of Higgins's Universal Alphabet.

⁷ twenty thousand = \$26,472, one hundred thousand pounds = \$132,364

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PICKERING. I came from Afghanistan to meet you.

HIGGINS. I was going to Afghanistan to meet you!

PICKERING. Where do you live?

HIGGINS. 27A Wimpole Street. Come and see me tomorrow.

PICKERING. I'm at the Carlton. Come with me now and let's jaw over supper.

HIGGINS. Right you are.

ELIZA. *(As Pickering passes.)* Buy a flower, kind sir, I'm short for my dinner.

PICKERING. I really haven't any change. I'm sorry. *(He goes.)*

HIGGINS. *(To Eliza.)* Liar. You said you could change a tenner.

ELIZA. You ought to be stuffed with nails, you ought. *(Throwing the bucket at him.)* Take the whole blooming bucket for five.⁸

The church clock strikes.

HIGGINS. A reminder. *(He raises his hat, throws money in the bucket, follows Pickering.)*

ELIZA. *(Picking up a coin.)* Ah—ow—ooh! *(A couple of coins.)* Aaah—ow—ooh! *(A bill.)* Aaaaaah—ow—ooh! *(More bills.)* Aasaaaaaaaaah—ow—ooh!!! *(The engine and headlights of a taxi pulling up and Freddy enters.)*

FREDDY. Got one at last. Oh, brilliant! *(To the girl.)* Where are the two ladies who were here?

ELIZA. They walked to the tube when the rain stopped.

FREDDY. And left me with a cab on my hands. Damnation!

ELIZA. *(With grandeur.)* Never you mind, young man. I'm going home in a taxi. *(Seeing his surprise.)* Twenty quid⁹ ain't nothin' to me, Charlie. *(Heading off.)* Camden Homeless Shelter! Let's see how fast you can make her hop to it. *(The cab starts off.)*

FREDDY. Well, I'll be dashed! *(TRANSITION: Music and a flood of sound and images from the world of phonetics and international dialects.)*

⁸ five = \$6.62

⁹ twenty quid: 20 pounds = \$26.47

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SCENE 2

Next day at 11 a.m. Higgin's laboratory on Wimpole Street. A formerly formal room with fireplace and large sliding doors leading to stairs down to the entrance hall. Now, it's filled with electronics, new and antique phonetics equipment, books, mementos from international travel and man-boy toys. Colonel Pickering, in well-pressed fatigues, is seated at the large desk, taking off headphones. Higgins is ending an elaborate demonstration of his paraphernalia. In the morning light, Henry Higgins looks like an energetic man of around forty. With little patience for formality, he's sloppily dressed in whatever takes the least effort.

HIGGINS. *(Tapping at a keyboard.)* Well, I think that's the whole show.

PICKERING. It's really amazing. Half of it didn't sink in, you know.

HIGGINS. Would you like to go over it again?

PICKERING. No, thank you, not now. I'm quite done up for this morning.

HIGGINS. Tired of listening to sounds?

PICKERING. Yes. It's quite a strain. I was rather proud because I can pronounce twenty-four distinct vowel sounds, but your hundred and thirty beat me. I can't hear a bit of difference between most of them.

HIGGINS. *(Popping chocolates.)* Oh, that comes with practice. You don't hear it at first, but keep listening and suddenly they're as different as A from B. *(His housekeeper, MRS. PEARCE, looks in, she runs a tight ship – or tries to.)* What's the matter?

MRS. PEARCE. A young woman wants to see you, sir.

HIGGINS. A young woman! What does she want?

MRS. PEARCE. Well sir, she says you'll be glad to see her when you know why she's here. She's looks quite poor, sir. I would have sent her away only I thought you'd want her to talk into your machines. You see such unusual people sometimes--you'll excuse me, sir--

HIGGINS. That's all right, Mrs. Pearce. Does she have an interesting accent?

MRS. PEARCE. Oh, something dreadful, sir. I don't know how you can be interested in it.

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HIGGINS. *(To Pickering.)* Let's have her in. Show her up, Mrs. Pearce. *(Rushes to his desk.)*

MRS. PEARCE. *(Reluctant.)* Very well, sir. It's for you to say. *(Exits downstairs.)*

HIGGINS. This is a bit of luck. I'll show you how I make transcriptions. We'll get her talking and I'll take it down first in Bell's Visible Speech, then in narrow IPA and then we'll record her so that you can turn her on as often as you like with the transcript in front of you.

MRS. PEARCE. *(Returning.)* This is the young woman, sir. *(Eliza enters, energized and determined. She dressed up, but certainly hasn't succeeded in passing for a professional. Her innocent vanity touches Pickering. Higgins, on the other hand, focuses on what he can get out of people.)*

ELIZA. Hashi zi jeyeytili tuta bonana! *(‘Long time no see!’)*

HIGGINS. This is the girl I recorded last night. She's useless! I've got all I want of African immigrants and I'm not going to waste time on her. *(To the girl.)* Go away. I don't want you.

ELIZA. Don't you be so cheeky. You ain't heard what I come for yet. *(To Mrs. Pearce.)* Did you tell him I come in an Uber?

MRS. PEARCE. Nonsense, girl! What do you think a man like Mr. Higgins cares what you came in?

ELIZA. Oh, we are proud! He ain't above giving lessons, not him. I heard him say so. Well, I ain't come here to ask for compliments and if my money's not good enough I can go elsewhere.

HIGGINS. Good enough for what?

ELIZA. Good enough for you. Now you know, don't you? I'm come to have lessons, I am. And to pay for 'em too, make no mistake.

HIGGINS. *(Stunned.)* Well! What do you expect me to say?

ELIZA. Well, if you was civilized, you might ask me to sit down, I think. Don't I tell you I'm bringing you business?

HIGGINS. Pickering, shall we ask this baggage to sit down or shall we throw her out the window?

ELIZA. Ah--ah--ah--ow--ow--ow--oo! I won't be called a baggage when I've offered to pay like any professional.

PICKERING. What is it you want, my girl?

ELIZA. I want to be a salesclerk in a flower shop stead of selling on the

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street. But they won't take me unless I can talk more fancy. He said he could teach me. Well, here I am ready to pay him--not asking any favors--and he treats me like dirt.

MRS. PEARCE. How can you be so foolish as to think you could afford to pay Mr. Higgins?

ELIZA. Why shouldn't I? I know what lessons cost as well as you and I'm ready to pay.

HIGGINS. How much?

ELIZA. Now you're talking! I thought you'd come off your high horse when you saw a chance of getting back a bit of what you tossed at me last night.

HIGGINS. Sit down.

ELIZA. Oh, if you're going to make a compliment of it --

HIGGINS. (*Thundering.*) Sit down.

MRS. PEARCE. (*Severely.*) Sit down, girl. Do as you're told. (*she places a chair and stands behind it.*)

ELIZA. Ah--ah--ah--ow—ow--oo!

PICKERING. (*Courteous.*) Won't you sit down?

ELIZA. Don't mind if I do. (*She sits.*)

HIGGINS. What's your name?

ELIZA. Eliza Doolittle. (*The name triggers their version of a white-boy rap...*)

HIGGINS. 'Eliza, Elizabeth, Betsy and Bess, They went to the woods to get a bird's nes':'

PICKERING. 'They found a nest with four eggs in it:'

BOTH. 'They took one apiece, and left three in it.' (*They laugh at their own wit.*)

ELIZA. Oh, don't be stupid.

MRS. PEARCE. You mustn't speak to Col. Pickering like that.

ELIZA. Well, why won't he speak sensible to me?

HIGGINS. Back to business. How much do you propose to pay me for lessons?

ELIZA. Oh, I know what's right. A friend of mine gets French lessons for

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seven quid¹⁰ an hour from a real French gentleman. Well, I didn't take to school back in Rwanda, but I learned English and been talking it my whole life. You wouldn't have the guts to ask me the same for teaching me my own language as you would for French, so I won't give more than a fiver. Take it or leave it.

HIGGINS. (*Pacing, rattling keys in his pockets.*) You know, Pickering, if you consider a fiver, not as a simple fiver, but as a percentage of this girl's income, it works out as equivalent to eighty pounds from a millionaire.

PICKERING. How so?

HIGGINS. Figure it out. A millionaire makes about two hundred fifty pounds a day. She earns about fifteen.

ELIZA. Who told you I only --

HIGGINS. She offers me a third of her day's income for a lesson. A third of a millionaire's income for a day would be somewhere around eighty quid. It's the widow's mite. By George, it's enormous! It's the biggest offer I ever had.

ELIZA. Eighty quid! What are you talking about? I never offered you eighty quid. Where would I get--

HIGGINS. Shut your mouth.

ELIZA. But I ain't got eighty quid. Oh--

MRS. PEARCE. Sit down. Nobody's going to touch your money.

HIGGINS. Somebody's going to touch you with a golf club if you don't stop sniveling. Sit down.

ELIZA. --ah--ah--ow--oo--o! You act like you was my mother.

HIGGINS. If I decide to teach you, I'll be worse than two mothers. Here. (*Offers his handkerchief.*)

ELIZA. What's this for?

HIGGINS. To wipe your nose. To wipe any part of your face that feels moist. Remember, that's your handkerchief and that's your sleeve. Don't mistake the one for the other if you want to become a professional in a shop. (*Eliza stares at him.*)

MRS. PEARCE. It's no use talking to her like that, Mr. Higgins, she doesn't understand. (*She takes the handkerchief.*)

¹⁰ 7 quid = \$9.26, fiver = \$6.61, 250 pounds = \$330, millionaire = \$100,000 a year, eighty pounds/quid = \$105.79.

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ELIZA. (*Snatching it back.*) Here! You give me that handkerchief. He give it to me, not to you.

PICKERING. (*Enjoying this.*) He did. It must be considered her property, Mrs. Pearce.

MRS. PEARCE. Serve you right, Mr. Higgins.

PICKERING. Higgins, I'm interested. What about the ambassador's dinner party? I'll say you're the greatest teacher alive if you make that work. I'll bet you all the expenses of the experiment you can't do it. And I'll pay for the lessons.

ELIZA. Oh, you are real good. Thank you, Captain.

HIGGINS. It's almost irresistible. She's so deliciously low--so horribly dirty—

ELIZA. -ah--ah--ah--ah--ow--ow--oooo!!! I ain't dirty. I washed my face and hands before I come, I did.

PICKERING. You're certainly not going to win her over with flattery, Higgins.

MRS. PEARCE. Oh, don't say that, sir. There's more than one way to win over a girl and nobody can do it better than Mr. Higgins, though he may not always mean to. I do hope you won't encourage him to do anything foolish.

HIGGINS. What is life but a series of high-risk opportunities? The challenge is to find them. I'll make a first-class pure-bred out of this pathetic rescue mutt.

ELIZA. Ah--ah--ah--ow--ow--oo!

HIGGINS. Yes, in six months--in three if she has a good ear and a quick tongue--I'll take her anywhere and pass her off as anything. We'll start today. Now! Take her away and clean her up, Mrs. Pearce. Sandpaper, if it won't come off any other way. Did you light the fireplace in the study?

MRS. PEARCE. Yes, but--

HIGGINS. Take off her clothes and burn them. Call up Harrods or Burberry or somebody for new ones. Wrap her in garbage bags till they come.

ELIZA. You're no gentleman. I'm a good girl, I am and I know what the like of you are.

HIGGINS. We don't want your immigrant prudery here, young woman.

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You've got to learn to behave respectably. Take her away, Mrs. Pearce. If she gives you trouble, wallop her.

ELIZA. No! I'll call the cops, I will.

MRS. PEARCE. But I've no place to put her.

HIGGINS. Put her in the dumpster.

ELIZA. Ah--ah--ah--ow--ow--oo!

PICKERING. Oh come on, Higgins! Be reasonable.

MRS. PEARCE. You must be reasonable, Mr. Higgins. You can't walk over everybody like this.

HIGGINS. (*Modulating to a professional.*) I walk over everybody? My dear Mrs. Pearce, my dear Pickering, I never had the slightest intention of walking over anyone. All I propose is that we should be kind to this poor girl. We must help her prepare for her new position in life. If I didn't express myself clearly it was because I didn't wish to hurt her delicacy -- or yours.

MRS. PEARCE. (*To Pickering.*) Well, did you ever hear anything like that, sir?

PICKERING. (*Enjoying it.*) Never, Mrs. Pearce. Never.

HIGGINS. (*Patiently.*) What's the matter?

MRS. PEARCE. Well, the matter is, sir, that you can't pick up a girl like you pick up a pebble on the beach.

HIGGINS. Why not?

MRS. PEARCE. Why not! You don't know anything about her. What about her parents? She may be married.

ELIZA. Me? Mbabarira, ihangane! (*'Sorry, sorry!'*)

HIGGINS. There! As the girl very properly says, 'mbabarira, ihangane!' Married? Don't you know a woman of that class looks like a fifty-year-old dish rag a year after she's married.

ELIZA. Who'd marry me?

HIGGINS. (*His best elocutionary style.*) By George, Eliza, the streets will be piled with the bodies of men shooting themselves for your sake before I've done with you.

MRS. PEARCE. You mustn't talk like that to her, sir.

ELIZA. I'm going. He's mental. I don't want no looney teaching me.

HIGGINS. Oh, I'm mad, am I? Very well, Mrs. Pearce, don't order the

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new clothes. Throw her out.

ELIZA. Nah--ow. You got no right to touch me.

MRS. PEARCE. You see what comes of being cheeky. This way, please.

ELIZA. I didn't want no clothes. I wouldn't have taken them. (*Throwing away the handkerchief.*) I can buy my own clothes.

HIGGINS. (*Retrieving it.*) This is what I get for offering to take you off the street and dress you beautifully and make you respectable.

MRS. PEARCE. Stop, Mr. Higgins. I won't allow it. Go home to your parents, girl and tell them to take better care of you.

ELIZA. I ain't got no parents. When I was a kid, my mother gave us British names and brought me over here for a better life. Anything was better than Rwanda. Being poor beats being dead anytime. (*The men are stunned.*) Then last year, my mum told me I was big enough to earn my own living and kicked me out.

MRS. PEARCE. Where's your father?

ELIZA. I ain't got no father. Had six stepfathers on account of immigration. But I'm done with them. And I'm a good girl, I am.

HIGGINS. Well then, what's the big deal? The girl doesn't belong to anybody -- is no use to anybody, but me. You can adopt her, Mrs. Pearce. I'm sure a daughter would be great fun for you. Now take her downstairs and --

MRS. PEARCE. But what's going to happen to her? Will she be paid anything?

HIGGINS. What'll she do with money? She'll have her food, her clothes. She'll only drink if you give her money.

ELIZA. Oh, you're an ass. Nobody ever saw a sign of liquor on me.

PICKERING. Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has feelings?

HIGGINS. (*Looking critically.*) Oh, I don't think so. Not any feelings that we need to worry about. Have you, Eliza?

ELIZA. I got my feelings same as anyone else.

HIGGINS. (*To Pickering.*) You see the difficulty?

PICKERING. What difficulty?

HIGGINS. To get her to talk grammar. The mere pronunciation is easy enough.

ELIZA. I don't want to talk grammar. I want to talk like a professional.

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MRS. PEARCE. Will you please keep to the point, Mr. Higgins. I want to know the terms. Will she be paid? And what's going to happen to her when you're finished? You must look ahead.

HIGGINS. What's going to happen to her if I leave her on the street? Tell me that, Mrs. Pearce.

MRS. PEARCE. That's her business, not yours.

HIGGINS. Well, when I'm done with her, we can throw her back on the street and it'll be her business again, so that's alright.

ELIZA. Oh, you got no heart. You don't care for nothing but yourself. Here! I had enough of this. I'm going. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you ought.

HIGGINS. *(Snatching a chocolate from the dish.)* Have some chocolates, Eliza.

ELIZA. *(Tempted.)* How do I know what might be in 'em? I've heard of girls being drugged by men like you. *(Higgins bites one in two, puts half in his mouth and offers her half.)*

HIGGINS. Pledge of good faith, Eliza. I eat one half you eat the other. *(Eliza opens her mouth to speak, he pops the half in.)* You'll have boxes of them, barrels of them, every day. You'll live on them.

ELIZA. *(She barely swallows the chocolate.)* I wouldn't have ate it, only I'm too refined to take it out of my mouth.

HIGGINS. Listen, Eliza. You said you came in an Uber.

ELIZA. Well, what if I did? I've as good a right to take an Uber as anyone else.

HIGGINS. You have Eliza and in the future you'll have as many Ubers as you want. You'll go up and down and around town in an Uber every day. Think of that, Eliza.

MRS. PEARCE. Mr. Higgins, you're tempting her. It's not right. She should think of the future.

HIGGINS. At her age! Why? There's time to think of the future when you don't have a future to think of. No, Eliza, do as this woman does, think of other people's futures, but never think of your own. Think of chocolates and limos and gold and diamonds.

ELIZA. No, I don't want no gold and no diamonds. I'm a good girl, I am.

HIGGINS. You'll stay a good girl, Eliza, under Mrs. Pearce's care. And

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you'll marry an investment banker with tight suits, the son of a CEO, who'll disinherit him for marrying you, but give in when he sees your beauty and goodness--

PICKERING. Excuse me, Higgins, I must interfere. Mrs. Pearce is right. If this girl is going to put herself in your hands for six months for an experiment in teaching, she must understand what she's doing.

HIGGINS. She's incapable of understanding anything. Besides, do any of us understand what we're doing? If we did, would we ever do it?

PICKERING. Clever, Higgins, but nonsense. *(To Eliza.)* Miss Doolittle--
ELIZA. *(Overwhelmed.)* Ah--ah--ow--oo!

HIGGINS. There! That's all you get out of Eliza. Ah--ah--ow--oo! No use explaining. As a military man you know that. Give her orders. That's what she wants: Eliza, you'll live here for the next six months learning how to speak beautifully like a professional in a florist. If you're good and do what you're told, you'll sleep in a warm bed, have lots to eat, money to buy chocolates and take rides in taxis. If you're naughty and lazy, you'll sleep in the mud room with the cock roaches and be walloped by Mrs. Pearce with a golf club. At the end of six months, you'll go to Buckingham Palace in a limousine, beautifully dressed. If the Queen finds out you're not respectable, you'll be deported as a warning to other immigrant flower girls. If you're not found out, you'll have money to start life as a clerk in a shop. If you refuse this offer, you'll be an ungrateful and wicked girl and the angels will weep for you. Now are you satisfied, Pickering? Can I put it more plainly, Mrs. Pearce?

MRS. PEARCE. *(Patiently.)* I think I'd better speak to the girl in private. I don't know that I consent to this arrangement. Of course, I know you don't mean to hurt her, but when you get what you call *(air quotes.)* 'interested' in people's accents, you never think what might happen to them. Or to you. Come with me, Eliza.

HIGGINS. Thank you, Mrs. Pearce. Bundle her off to the bathroom.

ELIZA. You're a big bully, you are. I won't stay here if I don't like. I won't let nobody wallop me. I never asked to go to Buckingham Palace, I didn't. I was never in trouble with the police, not me. I'm a good girl --

MRS. PEARCE. Come with me.

ELIZA. *(As she disappears out the door and down the steps.)* Well, what I

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say is right. I won't go near the Queen, not if I'm going to be deported. If I'd known what I was letting myself in for, I wouldn't have come here. I always been a good girl and I don't owe him nothing and I don't care and I won't be treated like dirt and I have my feelings the same as anyone else...
(Mrs. Pearce shuts the door and Eliza is no longer audible. Higgins picks up a video game controller to distract himself from the stress.)

PICKERING. Excuse the direct question, Higgins. Are you a man of good character where women are concerned?

HIGGINS. Have you ever met a man of good character where women are concerned?

PICKERING. Yes, frequently.

HIGGINS. Well, I haven't. The minute I let a woman make friends with me, she becomes jealous, demanding, suspicious and a damned nuisance. The minute I let myself make friends with a woman, I become selfish and a tyrant. Women screw up everything.

PICKERING. Like what, for example?

HIGGINS. Oh, God knows! I guess the woman wants to live her life and the man wants to live his and each tries to drag the other the wrong way. One wants to go north and the other south and the result is they both have to go east, even though they both hate east. So here I am a confirmed old bachelor and likely to stay so.

PICKERING. Come on, Higgins! You know what I mean. If I'm in this business I feel responsible for that girl. I hope it's understood that no one will take advantage of her.

HIGGINS. What! That thing! Sacred, I promise you. She'll be a student and teaching would be impossible unless students were sacred. I've taught hundreds of American million-heiresses how to speak English, the best-looking women in the world. They might as well be blocks of wood.

(Mrs. Pearce opens the door. She has Eliza's hat.)

HIGGINS. Well, Mrs. Pearce, is it alright?

MRS. PEARCE. I just want a word, if I may, Mr. Higgins.

HIGGINS. Of course. Come in. Don't burn that, Mrs. Pearce. *(Takes the hat.)* I'll keep it as a souvenir.

MRS. PEARCE. Careful, sir. I promised her not to burn it - but I better disinfect it.

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HIGGINS. (*Dropping it.*) Oh! Thank you. Well, what do you want to say?

PICKERING. Am I in the way?

MRS. PEARCE. Not at all, sir. Mr. Higgins, will you please be very particular what you say before the girl?

HIGGINS. Of course. I'm always particular about what I say. Why do you say that?

MRS. PEARCE. No, sir, you're not particular at all when you've lost something or when you get impatient. I'm used to it. But you really shouldn't swear in front of the girl.

HIGGINS. I never swear. That's a terrible habit. What the hell do you mean?

MRS. PEARCE. That's what I mean, sir. You swear too much. I don't mind your damning and shitting and what-the-hell and where-the-hell and who-the-hell—

HIGGINS. Mrs. Pearce! This language from you!

MRS. PEARCE. But there is a certain word I must ask you not to use. The girl just used it herself when she stubbed her foot. It begins with the same letter as foot. She doesn't know better. Nobody taught her. But she can't hear it from you.

HIGGINS. I don't admit to ever uttering it, Mrs. Pearce. (*She looks at him.*) Except maybe in a moment of extreme and justifiable excitement.

MRS. PEARCE. Only this morning, sir, you applied it to your foot, to your phone and to a loud...fire truck.

HIGGINS. Oh, that! Alliteration, Mrs. Pearce. Natural for a poet.

MRS. PEARCE. Well sir, whatever you call it, please don't let the girl hear you say it.

HIGGINS. Oh, very well, very well. Is that all?

MRS. PEARCE. No, sir. We'll have to be very particular with this girl as to personal cleanliness.

HIGGINS. Certainly. Quite right. Very important.

MRS. PEARCE. I mean not to be sloppy about her clothes or leave things around.

HIGGINS. Absolutely. I was going to call your attention to that. (*To Pickering, who's enjoying this.*) Little things matter, Pickering. Take care of the penny and the pounds will take care of themselves. True of personal

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habits and of money.

MRS. PEARCE. Yes, sir. Then would you be so good as not to eat everything directly out of its package, sir. Or to have your dinner on a paper towel resting on your stomach in front of the telly. And may I ask you not to come down to breakfast in your boxer briefs. You nearly gave the Fed Ex woman a heart attack.

HIGGINS. I may do things without thinking, but I don't have bad habits. By the way, my recliner has ants.

MRS. PEARCE. No doubt it does, Mr. Higgins. But if you'll --

HIGGINS. Oh, very well, very well! I'll never eat again.

MRS. PEARCE. I hope you're not offended, Mr. Higgins.

HIGGINS. Not at all, not at all. You're right, Mrs. Pearce. I'll be careful in front of the girl. Is that all?

MRS. PEARCE. No, sir. Might she wear one of those Japanese dresses you brought from abroad? I can't put her back in her old clothes.

HIGGINS. Of course. Anything you like. Is that all?

MRS. PEARCE. Thank you, sir. That's all. *(She goes out.)*

HIGGINS. Pickering, that woman has the wildest ideas about me. I'm a shy, mellow man. I've never really felt grown-up and confident like other chaps. But she's convinced I'm arbitrary, overbearing and bossy. I can't figure that out.

MRS. PEARCE. *(Returning.)* Pardon me, sir, there's trouble already. There's a hotel maid downstairs - Anitha Doolittle - who wants to see you. She says you have her daughter.

PICKERING. *(Rising.)* Uh oh!

HIGGINS. *(Promptly.)* Send the reprobate up.

MRS. PEARCE. Oh, very well, sir. *(She goes out.)*

PICKERING. She may not be a reprobate, Higgins.

HIGGINS. Nonsense. Of course, she's a reprobate.

PICKERING. Whether she is or not, I'm afraid we'll have trouble with her.

HIGGINS. If there's any trouble, she'll have it with me. And we're sure to get something interesting out of her.

PICKERING. About the girl?

HIGGINS. No. I mean her dialect.

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PICKERING. Oh!

MRS. PEARCE. *(At the door.)* Ms. Anitha P. Doolittle, sir. *(She admits ANITHA DOOLITTLE and exits. Anitha wears a hotel maid's uniform, but her hair, nails and accessories suggest a bold - if not polished - woman. She projects confidence, a firm commitment to the least amount of effort and seems free of both fear and conscience. She has the same African accent as Eliza, plus an expressive voice, the result of venting her feelings openly and constantly. Her present pose is wounded honor and firm resolution.)*

DOOLITTLE. *(Not sure which he is.)* Professor Higgins?

HIGGINS. Here. Good morning. Sit down.

DOOLITTLE. Morning, Governor. *(She sits nobly.)* I come about a very serious matter, Governor.

HIGGINS. *(To Pickering.)* Brought up in Northern Rwanda, near the Ugandan border. Last ten years in Camden, I think. Don't need any more of you. What do you want, Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE. I want my daughter, that's what I want. See?

HIGGINS. Of course, you do. You're her mother. You don't suppose anyone else wants her? I'm glad you've got some spark of family feeling left. She's upstairs. Take her away.

DOOLITTLE. What!

HIGGINS. Take her away. Do you think I'm going to keep your daughter for you?

DOOLITTLE. Now, look here, Governor. Is this reasonable? Is it fair to take advantage of a woman like this? The girl belongs to me. You got her. Where do I come in?

HIGGINS. Your daughter had the audacity to come to my house and ask me to teach her how to speak properly so she could get a job in a florist. This gentleman and my housekeeper have been here the whole time. How dare you come here to blackmail me? You sent her here on purpose.

DOOLITTLE. No, Governor.

HIGGINS. You must have. How else could you know she's here?

DOOLITTLE. Don't 'criminate me like that, Governor.

HIGGINS. The police will 'criminate you. This is a scam--a plot to extort money. I'll call immigration. *(Pulling out his phone.)*

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DOOLITTLE. Have I asked you for a brass farthing?¹¹ I ask the gentleman here, have I said one word about money?

HIGGINS. What else did you come for?

DOOLITTLE. (*Buttering him up.*) Well, what would a woman come for? Be human, Governor.

HIGGINS. Fess up, Anitha. Did you put her up to it?

DOOLITTLE. So, help me, Governor, I never did. I take my Bible oath I ain't seen the girl in two months.

HIGGINS. Then how did you know she's here?

DOOLITTLE. (*Almost musically.*) I'll tell you, Governor, if you'll only let me get a word in. I'm willing to tell you. I'm wanting to tell you. I'm waiting to tell you.

HIGGINS. Pickering, this woman has a certain natural rhetoric. Notice the rhythm of her native woodnotes. 'I'm willing to tell you. I'm wanting to tell you. I'm waiting to tell you.' Sentimental rhetoric! A strong influence of the African Christian church. It also accounts for her hypocrisy and dishonesty.

PICKERING. Oh, please, Higgins. I was raised in a Christian church myself. (*To Doolittle.*) How did you know the girl was here if you didn't send her?

DOOLITTLE. It was like this, Governor. Eliza sent back to the shelter for her luggage when she heard you was willing to let her stay here.

HIGGINS. How much luggage?

DOOLITTLE. Musical instrument, few pictures of home and a bird-cage. She said she didn't want no clothes. What was I to think from that, Governor? I ask you as a parent, what was I to think?

HIGGINS. So, you came to rescue her from a fate worse than death, right?

DOOLITTLE. Just so, Governor. That's right.

PICKERING. But why did you bring her luggage if you intended to take her away?

DOOLITTLE. Have I said a word about taking her away? Have I now?

HIGGINS. You're going to take her away on the double. (*Into his phone.*)

¹¹ brass farthing: *slang, meaning not worth anything, a brass farthing used to be worth a quarter of a penny*

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Mrs. Pearce.

DOOLITTLE. No, Governor. Don't say that. I'm not the woman to stand in my girl's way. Here's a career opportunity, as you might say and—
(*Mrs. Pearce opens the door.*)

HIGGINS. Mrs. Pearce, this is Eliza's mother. She's come to take her away.

DOOLITTLE. No. This is a misunderstanding. Listen here--

MRS. PEARCE. She can't take her away, Mr. Higgins. You told me to burn her clothes.

DOOLITTLE. That's right. I can't carry the girl through the streets naked as a baby's butt can I? I put it to you.

HIGGINS. You want your daughter. Take your daughter. If she doesn't have clothes go buy her some.

DOOLITTLE. Where's the clothes she come in? Did I burn them or did your missus here?

MRS. PEARCE. I'm the housekeeper. I've ordered clothes for your girl. When they're delivered, you can take her. You can wait in the kitchen. This way, please. (*Doolittle follows her to the door, hesitates.*)

DOOLITTLE. (*Confidentially.*) Listen here, Governor. You and me have been round the block, ain't we?

HIGGINS. Oh! Been round the block, have we? You'd better go, Mrs. Pearce.

MRS. PEARCE. I think so, sir. (*She's out.*)

PICKERING. The floor is yours, Ms. Doolittle.

DOOLITTLE. I thank you, Governor. Well, the truth is I feel a sort of chemistry with you and if you want the girl, I'm not so set on having her back that I wouldn't be open to an arrangement. Regarded in the light of a young woman, she's a fine, lovely girl. As a daughter, she's not worth the trouble, to tell you the truth. All I ask is my rights as a mother and you're the last man alive to expect me to let her go for nothing. Cause I can see you're one of the straight sort, Governor. Well, what's a hundred-pound note¹² to you? And what's Eliza to me? (*Nobly returning to chair.*)

PICKERING. I think you ought to know, Ms. Doolittle, that Mr.

¹² hundred-pound note = \$132

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Higgins's intentions are entirely honorable.

DOOLITTLE. Course they are, Governor. If I thought they wasn't, I'd ask a thousand.

HIGGINS. Do you mean to say you would sell your daughter for a thousand pounds?¹³

DOOLITTLE. Not on the street I wouldn't. But for a gentleman like you I'd do a good deal, I assure you.

PICKERING. Have you no morals, woman?

DOOLITTLE. (*Unembarrassed.*) Can't afford them, Governor. Neither could you if you was as poor as me. Not that I mean any harm, you know. But if Eliza's gonna get a bit out of this, why not me too?

HIGGINS. I don't know what to do, Pickering. There's no question that morally it's a crime to give this bird a penny. But there's a sort of rough justice in her claim.

DOOLITTLE. That's it, Governor. That's all I say. A mother's heart, as it were.

PICKERING. Well, I understand the feeling, but it seems hardly right --

DOOLITTLE. Don't say that, Governor. Don't look at it that way. What am I, gentlemen? I ask you, what am I? I'm one of the 'Undeserving Poor,' that's what I am. I work just enough hours at minimum wage to be Undeserving. Think of what that means: it means I'm up against the 'Morality of the 1%.' If there's anything being given away and I line up for a bit of it, it's always the same story, 'You're Undeserving, so you can't have it.' But my needs are as great as the most Deserving Widow that got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband. I don't need less than a Deserving Person -- I need more. I don't eat less. And I drink a lot more. I want a bit of fun, cause I'm a sophisticated woman. I want cheerfulness and music and a dance when I feel down. Well, they charge me just the same for everything as they charge the Deserving. What is 1% Morality? Just an excuse for never giving me anything. Therefore, I ask you, as two gentlemen, not to play that game on me. I'm playing straight with you. I ain't pretending to be Deserving. I'm Undeserving and I mean to go on being Undeserving. I like

¹³ thousand pounds = \$1322

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it and that's the truth. Will you take advantage of a person's nature to screw her out of the price of her own daughter what she's given birth to and brought to this land of plenty to be fed and clothed until she's grown big enough to be interesting to you two gentlemen? Is a hundred pounds unreasonable? I put it to you and I leave it to you.

HIGGINS. Pickering, if we were to train this woman for three months, she could choose between a seat in Parliament and a megachurch in Alabama.

PICKERING. What would you say to that, Ms. Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE. Not me, Governor, thank you kindly. I've heard all the preachers and all the politicians -- and I got my opinions and don't mind spreading them around -- but the hours they put in! That's hard work! I tell you it's a dog's life anyway you look at it. Undeserving Poverty is my line. Weighing one position with another, it's -- it's--well, it's the only one that has any spice in it, to my taste.

HIGGINS. I suppose we have to give her the hundred.

PICKERING. She'll make a bad use of it, I'm afraid.

DOOLITTLE. Not me, Governor, so help me I won't. Don't you be afraid that I'll save it and hoard it and live lazy on it. There won't be a penny left by Monday. I'll have to go to work same as if I'd never had it. It won't 'disincentivize' me, not at all. Just one good binge for myself and the mister, giving pleasure to ourselves and employment to others. And satisfaction to you to think it's not been thrown away.

HIGGINS. (*With his wallet.*) This is irresistible. Let's give her five hundred.

DOOLITTLE. No, Governor. I wouldn't have the heart to spend five hundred. Five hundred pounds is a lot of money: it makes a person feel responsible like. And then goodbye to happiness. You give me what I ask, Governor. Not a penny more, not a penny less.

PICKERING. Why don't you marry that mister of yours? I rather draw the line at encouraging immorality.

DOOLITTLE. Tell him so, Governor, tell him so. I'm willing. It's me that suffers by it. I've got no hold on him. I got to be agreeable to him. I got to cook him dinner. I'm a slave to that man, Governor, just because I'm not his lawful wife. And he knows it too. Catch him marrying me! Once I've

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got a ring and legal status again, he knows I'm not gonna think twice about him. Take my advice, Governor, marry Eliza while she's young and don't know no better.

HIGGINS. Pickering, if we listen to this woman another minute, we'll have no morals left. *(To Doolittle.)* A hundred pounds I think you said.

DOOLITTLE. Thank you kindly, Governor.

HIGGINS. You're sure you won't take five hundred?

DOOLITTLE. Not now. Another time, Governor.

HIGGINS. *(Handing her money.)* Here you are.

DOOLITTLE. Thank you, Governor. Good morning. *(Hurries to the door with what she came for, but when she opens it, she's confronted with Mrs. Pearce and a clean young woman in a simple Japanese kimono.)* Beg pardon, miss.

ELIZA. Go on! Don't you know your own daughter? *(Exclaiming simultaneously:)*

DOOLITTLE. Damn! It's Eliza!

HIGGINS. What the--!

PICKERING. Good heavens!

ELIZA. Don't I look silly?

HIGGINS. Silly?

MRS. PEARCE. Now, Mr. Higgins, please don't say anything to make the girl conceited about herself.

HIGGINS. Oh! Quite right, Mrs. Pearce. *(To Eliza.)* Yes, damned silly.

MRS. PEARCE. Please, sir.

HIGGINS. I mean extremely silly.

ELIZA. I'd look all right with my hat on. *(She finds her hat, puts it on and works the room.)*

HIGGINS. A new fashion, by George!

DOOLITTLE. *(With maternal pride.)* Well, I never thought she'd clean up as good looking as that, Governor. She's a credit to me, ain't she?

ELIZA. I tell you, it's easy to clean up here. Hot and cold water. No waiting in line. Woolly towels, there is. A wooden bowl of soap smelling like roses. Now I know why rich women is so clean.

HIGGINS. I'm glad the lavatory met with your approval. Doolittle, you brought your daughter up deprived.

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DOOLITTLE. Me! I never brought her up at all, except to beat her bottom now and then. She ain't accustomed to this, that's all. She'll pick up your free and easy ways.

ELIZA. I'm a good girl, I am and I won't pick up no free and easy ways.

HIGGINS. Eliza, if you say you're a good girl again, your mother will take you home.

ELIZA. Not her. You don't know my mother. All she come here for was to hit you up for money to get drunk on.

DOOLITTLE. Well, what else would I want money for? To put in the plate in church, I suppose. *(Eliza sticks out her tongue, Doolittle responds, Pickering steps between them.)* Don't you give me no lip and don't let me hear you giving this gentleman any lip neither or you'll hear from me. See?

HIGGINS. Do you have any advice for her before you go, Doolittle? Your blessing, for instance.

DOOLITTLE. No, Governor: I ain't such a chump as to stuff my children with all I know myself. If you want Eliza's mind improved, Governor, you do it yourself with a belt. So long, gentlemen. *(She turns to go.)*

HIGGINS. Stop. You'll come see your daughter every week. It's your duty, you know.

DOOLITTLE. *(Evasively.)* Certainly. I'll come, Governor. Just not this week, because I might be called back to my shift any time. But later on, you can depend on me. Afternoon, gentlemen. Afternoon, ma'am. *(Mrs. Pearce gives her a cold shoulder and goes out. She winks at Higgins, sympathizing with how difficult women are and exits.)*

ELIZA. Don't you believe the old liar. You won't see her again in a hurry.

HIGGINS. I don't want to, Eliza do you?

ELIZA. I don't want never to see her again. She's a disgrace she is, sitting on her butt, instead of working.

PICKERING. Isn't she a hotel maid, Eliza?

ELIZA. Don't let the uniform fool you. She just punches the clock then hides in a room watching cable all day. Ain't you going to call me Miss Doolittle anymore?

PICKERING. I beg your pardon, Miss Doolittle. It was a slip of the tongue.

ELIZA. Oh, I don't mind, only it sounded so fancy. *(Trying an*

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aristocratic attitude - unsuccessfully.) I'd like to take a taxi over to the shelter, get out and tell it to wait for me. Just to put the girls in their place a bit. I wouldn't speak to them, you know.

HIGGINS. You shouldn't disrespect your old friends now that you've risen in the world. That's being a snob.

ELIZA. You don't call them my friends now, I hope. They dissed me, why shouldn't I dis them? And you wouldn't believe what they sold while I was selling flowers. But if I'm getting new clothes, I'll wait. I'd like that.

(Grounding herself.) Now, listen you two. I'm not sure what you're getting out of this here arrangement, but I know why I'm here. I see how people treat the likes of you and I see how they treat the likes of someone who looks and talks like me. Can I trust you to get me where you are?

(Their stunned silence is interrupted by Mrs. Pearce returning.)

MRS. PEARCE. Now, Eliza. The new things have come for you to try on.

ELIZA. Ah--ow--oo--ooh! *(She runs out, screaming down the steps.)*

MRS. PEARCE. *(Following.)* Don't run in the house, girl.

HIGGINS. Pickering, we've got a helluva job ahead.

PICKERING. Higgins, we have. *(TRANSITION: Music and a montage of Higgins and Pickering drilling Eliza's phonetics, posture, conversation topics, etc. (somehow not reminding us of 'Rain in Spain' ...?))*

Transitioning to high-end portrait photography.)

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SCENE 3

MRS. HIGGINS'S home and studio. Sun pours in at a balcony. Through an arch, we see a photo shoot in the next room. Music. Assistants assist with lights, make-up and a wind machine. A woman with stylishly cut white hair is manning the camera and running the show. Although she's at an age when she could retire, Mrs. Higgins is a high-end portrait photographer and the room reflects her success. At the moment however, she's stuck with an awkward teenage model, Clara, clearly an amateur. Her mother, Mrs. Eynsford Hill stands by, helplessly supportive.

HIGGINS. *(Barreling in with a hat on.)* MOTHER!!!

MRS. HIGGINS. *(Poking her head out.)* Henry! What are you doing here? It is my studio day. You promised not to come. *(He tries to kiss her, she takes his hat off and presents it to him.)*

HIGGINS. Oh bugger.¹⁴ *(throws the hat down.)*

MRS. HIGGINS. Go home at once.

HIGGINS. *(Kissing her.)* I know, Mother. I came on purpose.

MRS. HIGGINS. But you mustn't. I'm serious, Henry. You offend all my clients. They stop coming when they meet you.

HIGGINS. Rubbish! I know I don't do small talk, but people don't mind. *(Sits.)*

MRS. HIGGINS. Oh, they don't? *(The photo shoot is waiting.)* Really dear you can't stay.

HIGGINS. I have to. I've got a job for you. A phonetic job.

MRS. HIGGINS. No use dear. I'm sorry, but I can't handle all your sounds. I like to get e-mails in your fancy alphabet, but I always have to read the translations you so thoughtfully attach.

HIGGINS. Well, this isn't a phonetic job.

MRS. HIGGINS. You said it was.

HIGGINS. Not your part of it. I've picked up a girl.

(Intrigued, Mrs. Higgins signals to end the shoot. Music stops. The Assistants clean up, Clara and her mother exit.)

MRS. HIGGINS. Does that mean that some girl has picked up you?

¹⁴ bugger: originally meaning sodomy, but now a general purpose swear word

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HIGGINS. Not at all. I don't mean an affair.

MRS. HIGGINS. What a pity!

HIGGINS. Why?

MRS. HIGGINS. Well, you never fall in love with anyone under forty-five. When will you discover there are some rather nice young women around?

HIGGINS. Oh, I can't bother with them. My idea of a loveable woman is someone as much like you as possible. I'll never get into young women. Some habits run too deep to change. (*Jingling keys in his pockets.*) Besides, they're all idiots.

MRS. HIGGINS. Do you know what you'd do if you really loved me, Henry?

HIGGINS. Oh bugger. Marry, I suppose?

MRS. HIGGINS. No. Stop fidgeting and take your hands out of your pockets. (*He grudgingly obeys.*) That's a good boy. Now tell me about the girl.

HIGGINS. She's coming to see you.

MRS. HIGGINS. I don't remember asking her.

HIGGINS. You didn't. If you'd known her you wouldn't have asked her.

MRS. HIGGINS. Really? Why?

HIGGINS. Well, it's like this. She's a homeless flower girl that I picked off the street.

MRS. HIGGINS. And invited her to my studio!

HIGGINS. Oh, it'll be all right. I've taught her to speak and she has strict orders for her behavior. She'll stick to two subjects: the weather and everybody's health -- 'Fine day and How do you do,' -- you know and not rattle on. That'll be safe.

MRS. HIGGINS. Safe? To talk about our insides. My clients are privileged -- used to a high level of decorum. How could you be so stupid, Henry?

HIGGINS. Well, she has to talk about something. She'll be all right. Pickering is in it with me. I sort of bet him that I'll pass her off as an executive in six months. I started on her a couple months ago and she's getting on like crazy. I'll win my bet. She's got a quick ear and she's easier to teach than my rich students because she's had to learn a complete new

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language. She speaks English almost like you speak French.

MRS. HIGGINS. That's good, at least.

HIGGINS. Well, it is and it isn't.

MRS. HIGGINS. What does that mean?

HIGGINS. You see, I've got her pronunciation down, but you have to consider not only how she pronounces, but what she pronounces and that's where -- *(They're interrupted by the Assistant.)*

STUDIO ASSISTANT #1. Mrs. and Miss Eynsford Hill have finished their shoot and are going to wait here for their proofs.

HIGGINS. Oh Lord! *(Grabs his hat, heads for the door but doesn't make it. At first, Higgins doesn't recognize Mrs. Eynsford Hill and Clara from the church in Covent Garden. Mrs. Eynsford Hill is 'well-bred,' earnest and probably not quite up to raising children alone. Clara's been raised with money, but the education and social skills haven't quite stuck.)*

MRS. HIGGINS. My son Henry.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Your famous son! I've so wanted to meet you, Professor Higgins.

HIGGINS. Delighted. *(He backs away.)*

CLARA. *(Confidence.)* Hi there!

HIGGINS. *(Staring.)* I've seen you somewhere. No idea where, but I've heard your voice. It doesn't matter. Sit down. *(Sits facing away.)*

MRS. HIGGINS. I'm sorry to say that my famous son has no manners. You mustn't mind him.

CLARA. *(Happily sitting.)* I don't.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. *(Bewildered.)* Not at all. *(Sits. Studio Assistant #2 ushers in Pickering.)*

STUDIO ASSISTANT #2. Colonel Pickering. *(Exits.)*

PICKERING. How do you do, Mrs. Higgins?

MRS. HIGGINS. So glad you've come. Do you know Mrs. Eynsford Hill—Miss Eynsford Hill? *(Handshake ritual and all sit.)*

PICKERING. Has Henry told you why we've come?

HIGGINS. *(Over his shoulder.)* We were interrupted, damn it!

MRS. HIGGINS. Oh Henry, really!

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. *(Half rising.)* Are we in the way?

MRS. HIGGINS. *(Re-seating her.)* No, no. Your proofs will be ready in a

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moment and you couldn't be here at a better time. We want you to meet a friend of ours.

HIGGINS. *(Hopefully.)* Yes, by George! We need a couple people. You'll do as well as anybody.

STUDIO ASSISTANT #2. *(Returns, ushering Freddy.)* Mr. Eynsford Hill.

HIGGINS. Holy crap, another one.

FREDDY. *(Shaking hands.)* How-do-you-do?

MRS. HIGGINS. Very good of you to come. *(Introducing.)* Colonel Pickering.

FREDDY. How-do-you-do?

MRS. HIGGINS. I don't think you know my son, Professor Higgins.

FREDDY. How-do-you-do?

HIGGINS. *(Instantly suspicious.)* I swear I've met you before. Where?

FREDDY. I don't think so.

HIGGINS. Doesn't matter. Sit down. *(He shakes Freddy's hand and almost slings him into a seat.)*

HIGGINS. Well, here we are! What the hell are we going to talk about until Eliza comes?

MRS. HIGGINS. Henry, you're the life and soul of your football matches, but you're rather challenging on more formal occasions.

HIGGINS. Am I? Very sorry. *(Suddenly proud.)* I suppose I am, you know. Ha, ha!

CLARA. *(Considering Higgins as date-able.)* I know how you feel. I don't have any small talk. If people would just be direct and say what they really think.

HIGGINS. God forbid!

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. But why?

HIGGINS. What they think they should think is bad enough, God knows, but what they really think would be a disaster. Do you think it would be alright if I said what I was thinking now?

CLARA. *(Eagerly.)* Is it really so cynical?

HIGGINS. Cynical! Who the hell said it was cynical? It would be obscene.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Oh! I'm sure you don't mean that, Mr.

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Higgins.

HIGGINS. We're all savages, more or less. We're supposed to be civilized and cultured--to know all about poetry and philosophy and art and science, but how many of us know the first thing? *(To Clara.)* What do you know of poetry? *(To Mrs. Hill.)* What do you know of science? *(About Freddy.)* What does he know of art or science or anything else? What the hell do you think I know of philosophy?

MRS. HIGGINS. Or of manners, Henry?

ASSISTANT #1. *(Entering.)* Miss Doolittle.

HIGGINS. *(Running to Mrs. Higgins.)* Here she is, Mother. *(Eliza, is beautifully -- if not comfortably -- dressed and makes such an impression they all rise. Higgins stands on tiptoes behind his mother and signals that she's the hostess. Eliza comes to Mrs. Higgins with rehearsed grace.)*

ELIZA. *(Focused on her overly-formal British pronunciations.)* How Do You Do, Mrs. Higgins? Mr. Higgins Told Me I Might Come.

MRS. HIGGINS. *(Warmly.)* Quite right. I'm very glad to see you.

PICKERING. How do you do, Miss Doolittle?

ELIZA. *(Shaking hands.)* Colonel Pickering, is it not?

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. I feel sure we've met before, Miss Doolittle. I remember your eyes.

ELIZA. How do you do? *(She sits gracefully in middle.)*

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. *(Introducing.)* My daughter Clara.

ELIZA. How do you do?

CLARA. *(Impulsively.)* How you doin'? *(Clara offers a fist bump, Eliza is tempted but doesn't take the bait, turns it to a hand shake. Clara sits, intrigued and jealous of Eliza.)*

FREDDY. I've certainly had the pleasure.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. My son Freddy.

ELIZA. How do you do?

(Freddy tries for a hand kiss, it fails, then sits - infatuated.)

HIGGINS. *(Suddenly.)* Good God yes! *(They stare.)* St.Paul's! What a damned thing!

MRS. HIGGINS. Henry, please! *(He's about to sit on the edge of her desk.)* Don't sit on that, you'll break it.

HIGGINS. Sorry. *(He goes for a chair, trips on something, then on*

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something else, knocks over the fire-irons and tangles with a Studio Assistant who is serving tea, finally plopping down somewhere, faking self-control. Mrs. Higgins looks at him, but says nothing. A long and painful pause.)

MRS. HIGGINS. *(At last.)* Will it rain, do you think?

ELIZA. The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation.

FREDDY. Ha ha! That's very funny!

ELIZA. What is wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right.

FREDDY. You nailed it!

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. I'm sure I hope it won't turn cold. There's so much pneumonia about. It runs right through our whole family every spring.

ELIZA. *(Darkly.)* My godmother died of pneumonia, so they said. *(Mrs. Eynsford Hill tuts sympathetically.)* But it's my belief they iced the old woman.

MRS. HIGGINS. *(Puzzled.)* Iced her?

ELIZA. Y-e-e-e-es, Lord love you! Why should she die of pneumonia? She come through diphtheria right enough the year before. I saw her with my own eyes. Fairly blue with it, she was. They all thought she was dead, but my mother kept spooning gin down her throat till she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Dear me!

ELIZA. *(On a roll.)* Why would a woman with that strength in her, die of pneumonia? And what become of her new I-Phone that should have come to me? Somebody nicked it. And what I say is, them that nicked it, iced her.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. What does 'iced her' mean?

HIGGINS. *(Hastily.)* Oh, that's the new small talk. To ice someone means to kill them.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. *(To Eliza, horrified.)* You surely don't believe that your godmother was killed?

ELIZA. Do I not?! Them she lived with would have killed her for a phone charger, let alone a phone.

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MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. But it can't have been right for your mother to pour liquor down her throat. That might have killed her.

ELIZA. Not her. Gin was mother's milk to her. Besides, my mum poured so much down her own throat, she knew the good of it.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Do you mean that she drank?

ELIZA. Drank? My word! Something chronic.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. How dreadful for you!

ELIZA. Not a bit. It never did her no harm what I could see. But then she did not keep it up regular. *(Cheerfully.)* Binge drinker, as you might say, from time to time. And always more agreeable when she was wasted. When she was out of work, one of my stepfathers used to give her money and tell her to go out and not come back until she'd drunk herself cheerful and loving-like. There's lots of men has to get their wives plastered to make them fit to live with. *(at ease now.)* You see, it's like this. If a woman has a little conscience, it always takes her when she's sober and then it makes her low spirited. Getting hammered just knocks that off and makes her happy. *(Freddy tries to suppress laughter.)* Hey! What are you snickering at?

FREDDY. The new small talk. You do it so awfully well.

ELIZA. If I was doing it proper, what was you laughing at? *(To Higgins.)* Have I said anything I oughtn't?

MRS. HIGGINS. Not at all, Miss Doolittle.

ELIZA. Well, that's a load off, anyway. *(About to start a new topic.)* What I always say is--

HIGGINS. *(Standing, looking at his watch.)* Ahem!

ELIZA. *(Taking the hint and stands.)* Well. I must go. *(All rise.)* So pleased to have met you. Good-bye. *(Repeating the hand shake ritual.)*

MRS. HIGGINS. Good-bye.

ELIZA. Good-bye, Colonel Pickering.

PICKERING. Good-bye, Miss Doolittle.

ELIZA. *(Nodding.)* Good-bye, all.

FREDDY. *(Escorting her to the door.)* Are you walking across the park, Miss Doolittle? If so--

ELIZA. Walk! Not fucking likely. I'm going in an Uber! *(She's out. Pickering gasps and sits. Freddy goes to the balcony to catch another*

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glimpse.)

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. (*In shock.*) Well, I really can't get used to the new ways.

CLARA. Oh, it's all right, mamma. People will think we never go anywhere if you're so old-fashioned.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. I admit I'm very old-fashioned, but I do hope you won't begin using that expression, Clara. I'm accustomed to hearing you calling everything dodgy and wonky. But this is really too much. Don't you think so, Colonel Pickering?

PICKERING. Don't ask me. I've been in Afghanistan for years. Manners have changed so much that I don't know if I'm at a dinner party or a latrine.

CLARA. It's all about what's in. There's no right or wrong -- it's easy-peasy. And it's so hip and makes people sound cool who aren't actually really cool.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. (*Rising.*) Well, I think it's time for us to go. (*Pickering and Higgins rise.*)

CLARA. (*Rising.*) Oh yes, we have three more appointments today. (*Imitating Eliza's exit – or trying to.*) Good-bye, Mrs. Higgins. Good-bye, Colonel Pickering. Good-bye, Professor Higgins.

HIGGINS. Good-bye. Be sure you try out that small talk at the appointments. Don't be nervous. Drive it home.

CLARA. (*All smiles.*) I will. So stupid, all these rules!

HIGGINS. (*Tempting her.*) So stupid. So damned stupid!

CLARA. (*Catching his build.*) So stupid. So damned stupid! So fu---

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. (*Cutting her off.*) Clara!

CLARA. Ta! Ha! ha! (*She exits laughing.*)

FREDDY. Well, I'm just gobsmacked¹⁵... (*He gives up and comes to Mrs. Higgins.*) Good-bye.

MRS. HIGGINS. (*Shaking hands.*) Good-bye. Would you like to meet Miss Doolittle again?

FREDDY. (*Eagerly.*) Yes, I would, most awfully.

MRS. HIGGINS. Well, contact my assistant. We'll set up a time.

¹⁵ gobsmacked: *Brit slang for surprised*

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FREDDY. Yes. Thanks awfully. Good-bye. *(He's out.)*

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Good-bye, Mr. Higgins.

HIGGINS. Good-bye. Good-bye.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. *(To Pickering.)* It's no use. I'll never be able to use that word.

PICKERING. It's not required, you know. You'll do quite well without it.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Only Clara is so hard on me if I'm not positively reeking with the latest fashions. Good-bye.

PICKERING. Good-bye. *(Shaking hands, then retreating to the window. Studio Assistant #2 hands Mrs. Eynsford Hill a folder with Clara's pictures.)*

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. *(Confidentially to Mrs. Higgins.)* You mustn't mind Clara. She has so few friends, poor child! She has no interest in schools, no matter how much I pay for them. I do everything I can for her. *(Hands her credit card to the Assistant, then opens the folder.)* She just doesn't seem to -- oh *(Pictures are less than flattering.)* ...oh... *(Another picture.)* ...OH. *(Closes the folder.)* But the boy is nice. Don't you think?

MRS. HIGGINS. Oh, quite nice. I'll always be delighted to see him.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Thank you, dear. Good-bye. *(Assistant ushers her out. Higgins and Pickering swoop in on Mrs. Higgins, sitting around her.)*

HIGGINS. Well? Did Eliza pass?

MRS. HIGGINS. You silly boy, of course she didn't pass as one of that crowd. Oh, she's a triumph of your art and of your stylist's art, but today she was simply a puppet trying not to break the rules you taught her.

PICKERING. But don't you think something could be done? I mean something to eliminate the 'colorful' elements from her conversation.

MRS. HIGGINS. Not as long as she's in Henry's hands.

HIGGINS. *(Hurt.)* Do you mean my language isn't proper?

MRS. HIGGINS. No, dearest. It would be quite proper--say in a locker room, but it would not be proper at a dinner party.

HIGGINS. Well, I have to say--

PICKERING. *(Interrupting.)* Come, Higgins, you must know yourself. I haven't heard such language since I reviewed the troops in boot camp.

HIGGINS. Oh, well, if you say so. I suppose I don't always talk like a

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bishop.

MRS. HIGGINS. (*Quieting Henry with a touch.*) Colonel Pickering, will you tell me the exact state of things in Wimpole Street?

PICKERING. (*As if this happily changed the subject.*) Well, I've come to live there with Henry. We work together at my Afgan Dialects and it's more convenient--

MRS. HIGGINS. I know about that, it's an excellent arrangement. But where does this girl live?

HIGGINS. With us, of course. Where would she live?

MRS. HIGGINS. But on what terms? Is she one of the help? What is she?

PICKERING. (*Slowly dawning.*) I think I know what you mean, Mrs. Higgins.

HIGGINS. Well, damned if I do! I worked on the girl every day for months to get her to this point. Besides, she's useful. She knows where my things are and remembers my appointments and so forth.

MRS. HIGGINS. How does your housekeeper get on with her?

HIGGINS. Mrs. Pearce? Oh, she's glad to get so much off her plate. Before Eliza came she had to find things and remind me of my appointments. But she's got some bug up her butt about Eliza. She keeps saying 'You don't think, sir,' doesn't she, Pick?

PICKERING. Yes, that's the formula. 'You don't think, sir.' That's the end of every conversation about Eliza.

HIGGINS. As if I ever stop thinking about the girl and her damned vowels and consonants. I'm worn out thinking about her and watching her lips and her teeth and her tongue, not to mention her soul, which is the strangest of all.

MRS. HIGGINS. You're a pretty pair of babies, playing with your live doll.

HIGGINS. Playing! The hardest job I ever tackled, Mother. But you've no idea how interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her. It's bridging the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul.

PICKERING. (*Drawing his chair closer to Mrs. Higgins.*) Yes, it's enormously interesting. I promise you, Mrs. Higgins, we take Eliza very seriously. Every week--every day almost--there's some new change.

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(Closer.) We keep records of every stage--dozens of videos and pictures--

HIGGINS. *(At her other ear.)* Yes, by George, it's the most absorbing experiment I ever tackled. She really fills up our lives, doesn't she, Pick?

PICKERING. We're always talking Eliza.

HIGGINS. Teaching Eliza.

PICKERING. Dressing Eliza.

MRS. HIGGINS. What!

HIGGINS. Inventing new Eliza's. *(Higgins and Pickering speak together:)*

HIGGINS. You know, she has an extraordinarily quick ear,

PICKERING. I tell you, my dear Mrs. Higgins, that girl

HIGGINS. just like a parrot. I've tried her with every

PICKERING. is a genius. She can play the piano quite beautifully.

HIGGINS. possible sort of sound that a human being can make--

PICKERING. We've taken her to classical concerts and to karaoke

HIGGINS. African dialects of course, but Middle Eastern, obscure

PICKERING. clubs and it's all the same to her: she plays everything

HIGGINS. Cantonese inflections, things it took me years to get, and

PICKERING. she hears by ear when she comes home, whether it's

HIGGINS. she picks them up like a shot, right away, as if she had

PICKERING. Beethoven and Brahms or Elton John and Lady Gaga, even

HIGGINS. been at it all her life. She's some kind of prodigy.

PICKERING. though three months ago, she'd never even touched a piano.

MRS. HIGGINS. *(Fingers in her ears.)* Sh--sh--sh--sh! *(They stop.)*

PICKERING. I beg your pardon. *(He pulls his chair back apologetically.)*

HIGGINS. Sorry. When Pickering starts shouting nobody can get a word in edgeways.

MRS. HIGGINS. Be quiet, Henry. Colonel Pickering, don't you realize that when Eliza walked into Wimpole Street, something walked in with her?

PICKERING. Her mother did. But Henry soon got rid of her.

MRS. HIGGINS. Something else.

PICKERING. What?

MRS. HIGGINS. A problem.

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PICKERING. Oh, I see. The problem of how to pass her off as respectable.

HIGGINS. I'll solve that. I've half solved it already.

MRS. HIGGINS. No, you two infinitely stupid male creatures: the problem of what to do with her afterwards.

HIGGINS. I don't see a problem. She can make her own way, with all the advantages I've given her.

MRS. HIGGINS. The advantages of that poor woman who was here just now? She has the surface of a professional, but not the education for a professional career!

PICKERING. *(Rather bored.)* Oh, that will be all right, Mrs. Higgins. *(He rises.)*

HIGGINS. *(Rising also.)* We'll find her some light employment.

PICKERING. She's happy enough. Don't you worry about her. *(He shakes hands as if he were consoling a child and heads for the door.)*
Good-bye.

HIGGINS. Anyway, no worries now. The thing's done. Good-bye, Mother. *(He kisses her and follows Pickering.)*

PICKERING. There are plenty of openings. We'll do what's right. Good-bye.

HIGGINS. *(To Pickering as they exit.)* Let's take her to a Shakespeare at the Globe.

PICKERING. Yes, let's! Her remarks will be delicious.

HIGGINS. She'll imitate the whole cast when we get home.

PICKERING. Brilliant! *(They break back into their white boy rap as they exit. Mrs. Higgins sits as the Assistants enter with new folders and papers for her. She studies a proof, but is unable to focus and throws a folder in the air – photos flying.)*

MRS. HIGGINS. Oh, men! men!! men!!! MEN!

INTERMISSION

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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