Pygmalion - Act V

di George Bernard Shaw (1913)

ACT V

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Mrs. Higgins's drawing-room. She is at her writing-table as before. The parlor-maid comes in.

THE PARLOR-MAID: *at the door* Mr. Henry, mam, is downstairs with Colonel Pickering.

MRS. HIGGINS: Well, show them up.

THE PARLOR-MAID: They're using the telephone, mam. Telephoning to the police, I think.

MRS. HIGGINS: What!

THE PARLOR-MAID: *coming further in and lowering her voice* Mr Henry's in a state, mam. I thought I'd better tell you.

MRS. HIGGINS: If you had told me that Mr Henry was not in a state it would have been more surprising. Tell them to come up when they've finished with the police. I suppose he's lost something.

THE PARLOR-MAID: Yes, mam. *going*

MRS. HIGGINS: Go upstairs and tell Miss Doolittle that Mr Henry and the Colonel are here. Ask her not to come down till I send for her.

THE PARLOR-MAID: Yes, mam.

Higgins bursts in. He is, as the parlor-maid has said, in a state.

HIGGINS: Look here, mother: Here's a confounded thing!

MRS. HIGGINS: Yes, dear. Good-morning. *He checks his impatience and kisses her, whilst the parlor-maid goes out.* What is it?

HIGGINS: Eliza's bolted.

MRS. HIGGINS: *calmly continuing her writing* You must have frightened her.

HIGGINS: Frightened her! Nonsense! She was left last night, as usual, to turn out the lights and all that, and instead of going to bed she changed her clothes and went right off: her bed wasn't slept in. She came in a cab for her things before seven this morning; and that fool Mrs. Pearce let her have them without telling me a word about it. What am I to do?

MRS. HIGGINS: Do without, I'm afraid, Henry. The girl has a perfect right to leave if she chooses.

HIGGINS: *wandering distractedly across the room* But I can't find anything. I don't know what appointments I've got. I'm—

Pickering comes in. Mrs. Higgins puts down her pen and turns away from the writing-table.

PICKERING: *shaking hands* Good-morning, Mrs Higgins. Has Henry told you? *He sits down on the ottoman.*

HIGGINS: What does that ass of an inspector say? Have you offered a reward?

MRS. HIGGINS: *rising in indignant amazement* You don't mean to say you have set the police after Eliza?

HIGGINS: Of course. What are the police for? What else could we do? *He sits in the Elizabethan chair.*

PICKERING: The inspector made a lot of difficulties. I really think he suspected us of some improper purpose.

MRS. HIGGINS: Well, of course he did. What right have you to go to the police and give the girl's name as if she were a thief, or a lost umbrella, or something? Really! *She sits down again, deeply vexed.*

HIGGINS: But we want to find her.

PICKERING: We can't let her go like this, you know, Mrs. Higgins. What were we to do?

MRS. HIGGINS: You have no more sense, either of you, than two children. Why—

The parlor-maid comes in and breaks off the conversation.

THE PARLOR-MAID: Mr. Henry: A gentleman wants to see you very particular. He's been sent on from Wimpole Street.

HIGGINS: Oh, bother! I can't see anyone now. Who is it?

THE PARLOR-MAID: A Mr. Doolittle, sir.

PICKERING: Doolittle! Do you mean the dustman?

THE PARLOR-MAID: Dustman! Oh no, sir: A gentleman.

HIGGINS: *springing up excitedly* By George, Pick, it's some relative of hers that she's gone to. Somebody we know nothing about. *To the parlor-maid* Send him up, quick.

THE PARLOR-MAID: Yes, sir. *She goes.*

HIGGINS: *eagerly, going to his mother* Genteel relatives! Now we shall hear something. *He sits down in the Chippendale chair.*

MRS. HIGGINS: Do you know any of her people?

PICKERING: Only her father: The fellow we told you about.

THE PARLOR-MAID: *announcing* Mr. Doolittle. *She withdraws.*

Doolittle enters. He is brilliantly dressed in a new fashionable frock-coat, with white waistcoat and grey trousers. A flower in his buttonhole, a dazzling silk hat, and patent leather shoes complete the effect. He is too concerned with the business he has come on to notice Mrs. Higgins. He walks straight to Higgins, and accosts him with vehement reproach.

DOOLITTLE: *indicating his own person* See here! Do you see this? You done this.

HIGGINS: Done what, man?

DOOLITTLE: This, I tell you. Look at it. Look at this hat. Look at this coat.

PICKERING: Has Eliza been buying you clothes?

DOOLITTLE: Eliza! Not she. Not half. Why would she buy me clothes?

MRS. HIGGINS: Good-morning, Mr. Doolittle. Won't you sit down?

DOOLITTLE: *taken aback as he becomes conscious that he has forgotten his hostess* Asking your pardon, ma'am. *He approaches her and shakes her proffered hand.* Thank you. *He sits down on the ottoman, on Pickering's right.* I am that full of what has happened to me that I can't think of anything else.

HIGGINS: What the dickens has happened to you?

DOOLITTLE: I shouldn't mind if it had only happened to me: Anything might happen to anybody and nobody to blame but Providence, as you might say. But this is something that you done to me: Yes, you, Henry Higgins.

HIGGINS: Have you found Eliza? That's the point.

DOOLITTLE: Have you lost her?

HIGGINS: Yes.

DOOLITTLE: You have all the luck, you have. I ain't found her; but she'll find me quick enough now after what you done to me.

MRS. HIGGINS: But what has my son done to you, Mr. Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE: Done to me! Ruined me. Destroyed my happiness. Tied me up and delivered me into the hands of middle class morality.

HIGGINS: *rising intolerantly and standing over Doolittle* You're raving. You're drunk. You're mad. I gave you five pounds. After that I had two conversations with you, at half-a-crown an hour. I've never seen you since.

DOOLITTLE: Oh! Drunk! am I? Mad! am I? Tell me this. Did you or did you not write a letter to an old blighter in America that was giving five millions to found Moral Reform Societies all over the world, and that wanted you to invent a universal language for him?

HIGGINS: What! Ezra D. Wannafeller! He's dead. *He sits down again carelessly.*

DOOLITTLE: Yes: He's dead; and I'm done for. Now did you or did you not write a letter to him to say that the most original moralist at present in England, to the best of your knowledge, was Alfred Doolittle, a common dustman.

HIGGINS: Oh, after your last visit I remember making some silly joke of the kind.

DOOLITTLE: Ah! You may well call it a silly joke. It put the lid on me right enough. Just give him the chance he wanted to show that Americans is not like us: That they recognize and respect merit in every class of life, however humble. Them words is in his blooming will, in which, Henry Higgins, thanks to your silly joking, he leaves me a share in his Pre-digested Cheese Trust worth three thousand a year on condition that I lecture for his Wannafeller Moral Reform World League as often as they ask me, up to six times a year.

HIGGINS: The devil he does! Whew! *Brightening suddenly* What a lark!

PICKERING: A safe thing for you, Doolittle. They won't ask you twice.

DOOLITTLE: It ain't the lecturing I mind. I'll lecture them blue in the face, I will, and not turn a hair. It's making a gentleman of me that I object to. Who asked him to make a gentleman of me? I was happy. I was free. I touched pretty nigh everybody for money when I wanted it, same as I touched you, Henry Higgins. Now I am worrited; tied neck and heels; and everybody touches me for money. It's a fine thing for you, says my solicitor. Is it? Says I. You mean it's a good thing for you, I says. When I was a poor man and had a solicitor once when they found a pram in the dust cart, he got me off, and got shut of me and got me shut of him as quick as he could. Same with the doctors: used to shove me out of the hospital before I could hardly stand on my legs, and nothing to pay. Now they finds out that I'm not a healthy man and can't live unless they looks after me twice a day. In the house I'm not let do a hand's turn for myself: Somebody else must do it and touch me for it. A year ago I hadn't a relative in the world except two or three that wouldn't speak to me. Now I've fifty, and not a decent week's wages among the lot of them. I have to live for others and not for myself: that's middle class morality. You talk of losing Eliza. Don't you be anxious: I bet she's on my doorstep by this: She that could support herself easy by selling flowers

if I wasn't respectable. And the next one to touch me will be you, Henry Higgins. I'll have to learn to speak middle class language from you, instead of speaking proper English. That's where you'll come in; and I daresay that's what you done it for.

MRS. HIGGINS: But, my dear Mr. Doolittle, you need not suffer all this if you are really in earnest. Nobody can force you to accept this bequest. You can repudiate it. Isn't that so, Colonel Pickering?

PICKERING: I believe so.

DOOLITTLE: *softening his manner in deference to her sex* That's the tragedy of it, ma'am. It's easy to say chuck it; but I haven't the nerve. Which one of us has? We're all intimidated. Intimidated, ma'am: that's what we are. What is there for me if I chuck it but the workhouse in my old age? I have to dye my hair already to keep my job as a dustman. If I was one of the deserving poor, and had put by a bit, I could chuck it; but then why should I, acause the deserving poor might as well be millionaires for all the happiness they ever has. They don't know what happiness is. But I, as one of the undeserving poor, have nothing between me and the pauper's uniform but this here blasted three thousand a year that shoves me into the middle class. *(Excuse the expression, ma'am: you'd use it yourself if you had my provocation).* They've got you every way you turn: It's a choice between the Skilly of the workhouse and the Char Bydis of the middle class; and I haven't the nerve for the workhouse. Intimidated: That's what I am. Broke. Bought up. Happier men than me will call for my dust, and touch me for their tip; and I'll look on helpless, and envy them. And that's what your son has brought me to. *He is overcome by emotion.*

MRS. HIGGINS: Well, I'm very glad you're not going to do anything foolish, Mr. Doolittle. For this solves the problem of Eliza's future. You can provide for her now.

DOOLITTLE: *with melancholy resignation* Yes, ma'am; I'm expected to provide for everyone now, out of three thousand a year.

HIGGINS: *jumping up* Nonsense! he can't provide for her. He shan't provide for her. She doesn't belong to him. I paid him five pounds for her. Doolittle: Either you're an honest man or a rogue.

DOOLITTLE: *tolerantly* A little of both, Henry, like the rest of us: A little of both.

HIGGINS: Well, you took that money for the girl; and you have no right to take her as well.

MRS. HIGGINS: Henry: don't be absurd. If you really want to know where Eliza is, she is upstairs.

HIGGINS: *amazed* Upstairs!!! Then I shall jolly soon fetch her downstairs. *He makes resolutely for the door.*

MRS. HIGGINS: *rising and following him* Be quiet, Henry. Sit down.

HIGGINS: I—

MRS. HIGGINS: Sit down, dear; and listen to me.

HIGGINS: Oh very well, very well, very well. *He throws himself ungraciously on the ottoman, with his face towards the windows.* But I think you might have told me this half an hour ago.

MRS. HIGGINS: Eliza came to me this morning. She passed the night partly walking about in a rage, partly trying to throw herself into the river and being afraid to, and partly in the Carlton Hotel. She told me of the brutal way you two treated her.

HIGGINS: *bounding up again* What!

PICKERING: *rising also* My dear Mrs. Higgins, she's been telling you stories. We didn't treat her brutally. We hardly said a word to her; and we parted on particularly good terms. *Turning on Higgins.* Higgins did you bully her after I went to bed?

HIGGINS: Just the other way about. She threw my slippers in my face. She behaved in the most outrageous way. I never gave her the slightest provocation. The slippers came bang into my face the moment I entered the room—before I had uttered a word. And used perfectly awful language.

PICKERING: *astonished* But why? What did we do to her?

MRS. HIGGINS: I think I know pretty well what you did. The girl is naturally rather affectionate, I think. Isn't she, Mr Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE: Very tender-hearted, ma'am. Takes after me.

MRS. HIGGINS: Just so. She had become attached to you both. She worked very hard for you, Henry! I don't think you quite realize what anything in the nature of brain work means to a girl like that. Well, it seems that when the great day of trial came, and she did this wonderful thing for you without making a single mistake, you two sat there and never said a word to her, but talked together of how glad you were that it was all over and how you had been bored with the whole thing. And then you were surprised because she threw your slippers at you! I should have thrown the fire-irons at you.

HIGGINS: We said nothing except that we were tired and wanted to go to bed. Did we, Pick?

PICKERING: *shrugging his shoulders* That was all.

MRS. HIGGINS: *ironically* Quite sure?

PICKERING: Absolutely. Really, that was all.

MRS. HIGGINS: You didn't thank her, or pet her, or admire her, or tell her how splendid she'd been.

HIGGINS: *impatiently* But she knew all about that. We didn't make speeches to her, if that's what you mean.

PICKERING: *conscience stricken* Perhaps we were a little inconsiderate. Is she very angry?

MRS. HIGGINS: *returning to her place at the writing-table* Well, I'm afraid she won't go

MRS. HIGGINS: back to Wimpole Street, especially now that Mr. Doolittle is able to keep up the position you

MRS. HIGGINS: have thrust on her; but she says she is quite willing to meet you on friendly terms and to let

MRS. HIGGINS: bygones be bygones.

HIGGINS: *furious* Is she, by George? Ho!

MRS. HIGGINS: If you promise to behave yourself, Henry, I'll ask her to come down. If not, go home; for you have taken up quite enough of my time.

HIGGINS: Oh, all right. Very well. Pick: you behave yourself. Let us put on our best Sunday manners for this creature that we picked out of the mud. *He flings himself sulkily into the Elizabethan chair.*

DOOLITTLE: *remonstrating* Now, now, Henry Higgins! have some consideration for my feelings as a middle class man.

MRS. HIGGINS: Remember your promise, Henry. *She presses the bell-button on the writing-table.* Mr. Doolittle: Will you be so good as to step out on the balcony for a moment. I don't want Eliza to have the shock of your news until she has made it up with these two gentlemen. Would you mind?

DOOLITTLE: As you wish, lady. Anything to help Henry to keep her off my hands. *He disappears through the window.*

The parlor-maid answers the bell. Pickering sits down in Doolittle's place.

MRS. HIGGINS: Ask Miss Doolittle to come down, please.

THE PARLOR-MAID: Yes, mam. *She goes out.*

MRS. HIGGINS: Now, Henry: Be good.

HIGGINS: I am behaving myself perfectly.

PICKERING: He is doing his best, Mrs. Higgins.

A pause. Higgins throws back his head, stretches out his legs and begins to whistle.

MRS. HIGGINS: Henry, dearest, you don't look at all nice in that attitude.

HIGGINS: *pulling himself together* I was not trying to look nice, mother.

MRS. HIGGINS: It doesn't matter, dear. I only wanted to make you speak.

HIGGINS: Why?

MRS. HIGGINS: Because you can't speak and whistle at the same time.

Higgins groans. Another very trying pause.

HIGGINS: *springing up, out of patience* Where the devil is that girl? Are we to wait here all day?

Eliza enters, sunny, self-possessed, and giving a staggeringly convincing exhibition of ease of manner. She carries a little work-basket, and is very much at home. Pickering is too much taken aback to rise.

LIZA: How do you do, Professor Higgins? Are you quite well?

HIGGINS: *choking* Am I—*He can say no more.*

LIZA: But of course you are: You are never ill. So glad to see you again, Colonel Pickering. *He rises hastily; and they shake hands.* Quite chilly this morning, isn't it? *She sits down on his left. He sits beside her.*

HIGGINS: Don't you dare try this game on me. I taught it to you; and it doesn't take me in. Get up and come home; and don't be a fool.

Eliza takes a piece of needlework from her basket, and begins to stitch at it, without taking the least notice of this outburst.

MRS. HIGGINS: Very nicely put, indeed, Henry. No woman could resist such an invitation.

HIGGINS: You let her alone, mother. Let her speak for herself. You will jolly soon see whether she has an idea that I haven't put into her head or a word that I haven't put into her mouth. I tell you I have created this thing out of the squashed cabbage leaves of Covent Garden; and now she pretends to play the fine lady with me.

MRS. HIGGINS: *placidly* Yes, dear; but you'll sit down, won't you?

Higgins sits down again, savagely.

LIZA: *to Pickering, taking no apparent notice of Higgins, and working away deftly* Will you drop me altogether now that the experiment is over, Colonel Pickering?

PICKERING: Oh don't. You mustn't think of it as an experiment. It shocks me, somehow.

LIZA: Oh, I'm only a squashed cabbage leaf.

PICKERING: *impulsively* No.

LIZA: *continuing quietly—but I owe so much to you that I should be very unhappy if you forgot me.*

PICKERING: It's very kind of you to say so, Miss Doolittle.

LIZA: It's not because you paid for my dresses. I know you are generous to everybody with money. But

it was from you that I learnt really nice manners; and that is what makes one a lady, isn't it? You see it was so very difficult for me with the example of Professor Higgins always before me. I was brought up to be just like him, unable to control myself, and using bad language on the slightest provocation. And I should never have known that ladies and gentlemen didn't behave like that if you hadn't been there.

HIGGINS: Well!!

PICKERING: Oh, that's only his way, you know. He doesn't mean it.

LIZA: Oh, I didn't mean it either, when I was a flower girl. It was only my way. But you see I did it; and that's what makes the difference after all.

PICKERING: No doubt. Still, he taught you to speak; and I couldn't have done that, you know.

LIZA: *trivially* Of course: That is his profession.

HIGGINS: Damnation!

LIZA: *continuing* It was just like learning to dance in the fashionable way: There was nothing more than that in it. But do you know what began my real education?

PICKERING: What?

LIZA: *stopping her work for a moment* Your calling me Miss Doolittle that day when I first came to Wimpole Street. That was the beginning of self-respect for me. *She resumes her stitching.* And there were a hundred little things you never noticed, because they came naturally to you. Things about standing up and taking off your hat and opening doors—

PICKERING: Oh, that was nothing.

LIZA: Yes: Things that showed you thought and felt about me as if I were something better than a scullerymaid; though of course I know you would have been just the same to a scullery-maid if she had been let in the drawing-room. You never took off your boots in the dining room when I was there.

PICKERING: You mustn't mind that. Higgins takes off his boots all over the place.

LIZA: I know. I am not blaming him. It is his way, isn't it? But it made such a difference to me that you didn't do it. You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up *(the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on),* the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will.

MRS. HIGGINS: Please don't grind your teeth, Henry.

PICKERING: Well, this is really very nice of you, Miss Doolittle.

LIZA: I should like you to call me Eliza, now, if you would.

PICKERING: Thank you. Eliza, of course.

LIZA: And I should like Professor Higgins to call me Miss Doolittle.

HIGGINS: I'll see you damned first.

MRS. HIGGINS: Henry! Henry!

PICKERING: *laughing* Why don't you slang back at him? Don't stand it. It would do him a lot of good.

LIZA: I can't. I could have done it once; but now I can't go back to it. Last night, when I was wandering about, a girl spoke to me; and I tried to get back into the old way with her; but it was no use. You

told me, you know, that when a child is brought to a foreign country, it picks up the language in a few weeks, and forgets its own. Well, I am a child in your country. I have forgotten my own language, and can speak nothing but yours. That's the real break-off with the corner of Tottenham Court Road. Leaving Wimpole Street finishes it.

PICKERING: *much alarmed* Oh! but you're coming back to Wimpole Street, aren't you? You'll forgive Higgins?

HIGGINS: *rising* Forgive! Will she, by George! Let her go. Let her find out how she can get on without us. She will relapse into the gutter in three weeks without me at her elbow.

Doolittle appears at the centre window. With a look of dignified reproach at Higgins, he comes slowly and silently to his daughter, who, with her back to the window, is unconscious of his approach.

PICKERING: He's incorrigible, Eliza. You won't relapse, will you?

LIZA: No: Not now. Never again. I have learnt my lesson. I don't believe I could utter one of the old sounds if I tried. *Doolittle touches her on her left shoulder. She drops her work, losing her self-possession utterly at the spectacle of her father's splendor* A—a—a—a—a—ah—ow—ooh!

HIGGINS: *with a crow of triumph* Aha! Just so. A—a—a—a—ahowooh! Ah! a—a—a—ahowooh! A—a—a—a—ahowooh! Victory! Victory! *He throws himself on the divan, folding his arms, and spraddling arrogantly.*

DOOLITTLE: Can you blame the girl? Don't look at me like that, Eliza. It ain't my fault. I've come into money.

LIZA: You must have touched a millionaire this time, dad.

DOOLITTLE: I have. But I'm dressed something special today. I'm going to St. George's, Hanover Square. Your stepmother is going to marry me.

LIZA: *angrily* You're going to let yourself down to marry that low common woman!

PICKERING: *quietly* He ought to, Eliza. *To Doolittle* Why has she changed her mind?

DOOLITTLE: *sadly* Intimidated, Governor. Intimidated. Middle class morality claims its victim. Won't you put on your hat, Liza, and come and see me turned off?

LIZA: If the Colonel says I must, I—I'll—*almost sobbing* I'll demean myself. And get insulted for my pains, like enough.

DOOLITTLE: Don't be afraid: she never comes to words with anyone now, poor woman! respectability has broke all the spirit out of her.

PICKERING: *squeezing Eliza's elbow gently* Be kind to them, Eliza. Make the best of it.

LIZA: *forcing a little smile for him through her vexation* Oh well, just to show there's no ill feeling. I'll be back in a moment. *She goes out.*

DOOLITTLE: *sitting down beside Pickering* I feel uncommon nervous about the ceremony, Colonel. I wish you'd come and see me through it.

PICKERING: But you've been through it before, man. You were married to Eliza's mother.

DOOLITTLE: Who told you that, Colonel?

PICKERING: Well, nobody told me. But I concluded naturally—

DOOLITTLE: No: That ain't the natural way, Colonel: It's only the middle class way. My way was always the undeserving way. But don't say nothing to Eliza. She don't know: I always had a delicacy about telling her.

PICKERING: Quite right. We'll leave it so, if you don't mind.

DOOLITTLE: And you'll come to the church, Colonel, and put me through straight?

PICKERING: With pleasure. As far as a bachelor can.

MRS. HIGGINS: May I come, Mr. Doolittle? I should be very sorry to miss your wedding.

DOOLITTLE: I should indeed be honored by your condescension, ma'am; and my poor old woman would take it as a tremenjous compliment. She's been very low, thinking of the happy days that are no more.

MRS. HIGGINS: *rising* I'll order the carriage and get ready. *The men rise, except Higgins.* I shan't be more than fifteen minutes. *As she goes to the door Eliza comes in, hatted and buttoning her gloves.* I'm going to the church to see your father married, Eliza. You had better come in the brougham with me. Colonel Pickering can go on with the bridegroom.

Mrs. Higgins goes out. Eliza comes to the middle of the room between the centre window and the ottoman. Pickering joins her.

DOOLITTLE: Bridegroom! What a word! It makes a man realize his position, somehow. *He takes up his hat and goes towards the door.*

PICKERING: Before I go, Eliza, do forgive him and come back to us.

LIZA: I don't think papa would allow me. Would you, dad?

DOOLITTLE: *sad but magnanimous* They played you off very cunning, Eliza, them two sportsmen. If it had been only one of them, you could have nailed him. But you see, there was two; and one of them chaperoned the other, as you might say. *To Pickering* It was artful of you, Colonel; but I bear no malice: I should have done the same myself. I been the victim of one woman after another all my life; and I don't grudge you two getting the better of Eliza. I shan't interfere. It's time for us to go, Colonel. So long, Henry. See you in St. George's, Eliza. *He goes out.*

PICKERING: *coaxing* Do stay with us, Eliza. *He follows Doolittle.*

Eliza goes out on the balcony to avoid being alone with Higgins. He rises and joins her there. She immediately comes back into the room and makes for the door; but he goes along the balcony quickly and gets his back to the door before she reaches it.

HIGGINS: Well, Eliza, you've had a bit of your own back, as you call it. Have you had enough? and are you going to be reasonable? Or do you want any more?

LIZA: You want me back only to pick up your slippers and put up with your tempers and fetch and carry for you.

HIGGINS: I haven't said I wanted you back at all.

LIZA: Oh, indeed. Then what are we talking about?

HIGGINS: About you, not about me. If you come back I shall treat you just as I have always treated you. I can't change my nature; and I don't intend to change my manners. My manners are exactly the same as Colonel Pickering's.

LIZA: That's not true. He treats a flower girl as if she was a duchess.

HIGGINS: And I treat a duchess as if she was a flower girl.

LIZA: I see. *She turns away composedly, and sits on the ottoman, facing the window.* The same to everybody.

HIGGINS: Just so.

LIZA: Like father.

HIGGINS: *grinning, a little taken down* Without accepting the comparison at all points, Eliza, it's quite true that your father is not a snob, and that he will be quite at home in any station of life to which his eccentric destiny may call him. *Seriously* The great secret, Eliza, is not having bad manners or good manners or any other particular sort of manners, but having the same manner for all human souls: in short, behaving as if you were in Heaven, where there are no third-class carriages, and one soul is as good as another.

LIZA: Amen. You are a born preacher.

HIGGINS: *irritated* The question is not whether I treat you rudely, but whether you ever heard me treat anyone else better.

LIZA: *with sudden sincerity* I don't care how you treat me. I don't mind your swearing at me. I don't mind a black eye: I've had one before this. But *standing up and facing him* I won't be passed over.

HIGGINS: Then get out of my way; for I won't stop for you. You talk about me as if I were a motor bus.

LIZA: So you are a motor bus: all bounce and go, and no consideration for anyone. But I can do without you: Don't think I can't.

HIGGINS: I know you can. I told you you could.

LIZA: *wounded, getting away from him to the other side of the ottoman with her face to the hearth* I know you did, you brute. You wanted to get rid of me.

HIGGINS: Liar.

LIZA: Thank you. *She sits down with dignity.*

HIGGINS: You never asked yourself, I suppose, whether I could do without YOU.

LIZA: *earnestly* Don't you try to get round me. You'll HAVE to do without me.

HIGGINS: *arrogant* I can do without anybody. I have my own soul: My own spark of divine fire. But *with sudden humility* I shall miss you, Eliza. *He sits down near her on the ottoman.* I have learnt something from your idiotic notions: I confess that humbly and gratefully. And I have grown accustomed to your voice and appearance. I like them, rather.

LIZA: Well, you have both of them on your gramophone and in your book of photographs. When you feel lonely without me, you can turn the machine on. It's got no feelings to hurt.

HIGGINS: I can't turn your soul on. Leave me those feelings; and you can take away the voice and the face. They are not you.

LIZA: Oh, you ARE a devil. You can twist the heart in a girl as easy as some could twist her arms to hurt her. Mrs. Pearce warned me. Time and again she has wanted to leave you; and you always got round her at the last minute. And you don't care a bit for her. And you don't care a bit for me.

HIGGINS: I care for life, for humanity; and you are a part of it that has come my way and been built into my house. What more can you or anyone ask?

LIZA: I won't care for anybody that doesn't care for me.

HIGGINS: Commercial principles, Eliza. Like *reproducing her Covent Garden pronunciation with professional exactness* s'yollin voylets *selling violets,* isn't it?

LIZA: Don't sneer at me. It's mean to sneer at me.

HIGGINS: I have never sneered in my life. Sneering doesn't become either the human face or the human soul. I am expressing my righteous contempt for Commercialism. I don't and won't trade in

affection. You call me a brute because you couldn't buy a claim on me by fetching my slippers and finding my spectacles. You were a fool: I think a woman fetching a man's slippers is a disgusting sight: did I ever fetch YOUR slippers? I think a good deal more of you for throwing them in my face. No use slaving for me and then saying you want to be cared for: Who cares for a slave? If you come back, come back for the sake of good fellowship; for you'll get nothing else. You've had a thousand times as much out of me as I have out of you; and if you dare to set up your little dog's tricks of fetching and carrying slippers against my creation of a Duchess Eliza, I'll slam the door in your silly face.

LIZA: What did you do it for if you didn't care for me?

HIGGINS: *heartily* Why, because it was my job.

LIZA: You never thought of the trouble it would make for me.

HIGGINS: Would the world ever have been made if its maker had been afraid of making trouble? Making life means making trouble. There's only one way of escaping trouble; and that's killing things. Cowards, you notice, are always shrieking to have troublesome people killed.

LIZA: I'm no preacher: I don't notice things like that. I notice that you don't notice me.

HIGGINS: *jumping up and walking about intolerantly* Eliza: You're an idiot. I waste the treasures of my Miltonic mind by spreading them before you. Once for all, understand that I go my way and do my work without caring twopence what happens to either of us. I am not intimidated, like your father and your stepmother. So you can come back or go to the devil: Which you please.

LIZA: What am I to come back for?

HIGGINS: *bouncing up on his knees on the ottoman and leaning over it to her* For the fun of it. That's why I took you on.

LIZA: *with averted face* And you may throw me out tomorrow if I don't do everything you want me to?

HIGGINS: Yes; and you may walk out tomorrow if I don't do everything YOU want me to.

LIZA: And live with my stepmother?

HIGGINS: Yes, or sell flowers.

LIZA: Oh! if I only COULD go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both you and father and all the world! Why did you take my independence from me? Why did I give it up? I'm a slave now, for all my fine clothes.

HIGGINS: Not a bit. I'll adopt you as my daughter and settle money on you if you like. Or would you rather marry Pickering?

LIZA: *looking fiercely round at him* I wouldn't marry YOU if you asked me; and you're nearer my age than what he is.

HIGGINS: *gently* Than he is: Not "than what he is."

LIZA: *losing her temper and rising* I'll talk as I like. You're not my teacher now.

HIGGINS: *reflectively* I don't suppose Pickering would, though. He's as confirmed an old bachelor as I am.

LIZA: That's not what I want; and don't you think it. I've always had chaps enough wanting me that way. Freddy Hill writes to me twice and three times a day, sheets and sheets.

HIGGINS: *disagreeably surprised* Damn his impudence! *He recoils and finds himself sitting on his heels.*

LIZA: He has a right to if he likes, poor lad. And he does love me.

HIGGINS: *getting off the ottoman* You have no right to encourage him.

LIZA: Every girl has a right to be loved.

HIGGINS: What! By fools like that?

LIZA: Freddy's not a fool. And if he's weak and poor and wants me, may be he'd make me happier than my betters that bully me and don't want me.

HIGGINS: Can he MAKE anything of you? That's the point.

LIZA: Perhaps I could make something of him. But I never thought of us making anything of one another; and you never think of anything else. I only want to be natural.

HIGGINS: In short, you want me to be as infatuated about you as Freddy? Is that it?

LIZA: No I don't. That's not the sort of feeling I want from you. And don't you be too sure of yourself or of me. I could have been a bad girl if I'd liked. I've seen more of some things than you, for all your learning. Girls like me can drag gentlemen down to make love to them easy enough. And they wish each other dead the next minute.

HIGGINS: Of course they do. Then what in thunder are we quarrelling about?

LIZA: *much troubled* I want a little kindness. I know I'm a common ignorant girl, and you a book-learned gentleman; but I'm not dirt under your feet. What I done *correcting herself* what I did was not for the dresses and the taxis: I did it because we were pleasant together and I come—came—to care for you; not to want you to make love to me, and not forgetting the difference between us, but more friendly like.

HIGGINS: Well, of course. That's just how I feel. And how Pickering feels. Eliza: you're a fool.

LIZA: That's not a proper answer to give me *she sinks on the chair at the writing-table in tears.*

HIGGINS: It's all you'll get until you stop being a common idiot. If you're going to be a lady, you'll have to give up feeling neglected if the men you know don't spend half their time snivelling over you and the other half giving you black eyes. If you can't stand the coldness of my sort of life, and the strain of it, go back to the gutter. Work til you are more a brute than a human being; and then cuddle and squabble and drink til you fall asleep. Oh, it's a fine life, the life of the gutter. It's real: it's warm: it's violent: you can feel it through the thickest skin: you can taste it and smell it without any training or any work. Not like Science and Literature and Classical Music and Philosophy and Art. You find me cold, unfeeling, selfish, don't you? Very well: be off with you to the sort of people you like. Marry some sentimental hog or other with lots of money, and a thick pair of lips to kiss you with and a thick pair of boots to kick you with. If you can't appreciate what you've got, you'd better get what you can appreciate.

LIZA: *desperate* Oh, you are a cruel tyrant. I can't talk to you: You turn everything against me: I'm always in the wrong. But you know very well all the time that you're nothing but a bully. You know I can't go back to the gutter, as you call it, and that I have no real friends in the world but you and the Colonel. You know well I couldn't bear to live with a low common man after you two; and it's wicked and cruel of you to insult me by pretending I could. You think I must go back to Wimpole Street because I have nowhere else to go but father's. But don't you be too sure that you have me under your feet to be trampled on and talked down. I'll marry Freddy, I will, as soon as he's able to support me.

HIGGINS: *sitting down beside her* Rubbish! you shall marry an ambassador. You shall marry the Governor-General of India or the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, or somebody who wants a deputy-queen. I'm not going to have my masterpiece thrown away on Freddy.

LIZA: You think I like you to say that. But I haven't forgot what you said a minute ago; and I won't be coaxed round as if I was a baby or a puppy. If I can't have kindness, I'll have independence.

HIGGINS: Independence? That's middle class blasphemy. We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth.

LIZA: *rising determinedly* I'll let you see whether I'm dependent on you. If you can preach, I can teach. I'll go and be a teacher.

HIGGINS: What'll you teach, in heaven's name?

LIZA: What you taught me. I'll teach phonetics.

HIGGINS: Ha! Ha! Ha!

LIZA: I'll offer myself as an assistant to Professor Nepean.

HIGGINS: *rising in a fury* What! That impostor! That humbug! That toadying ignoramus! Teach him my methods! My discoveries! You take one step in his direction and I'll wring your neck. *He lays hands on her.* Do you hear?

LIZA: *defiantly non-resistant* Wring away. What do I care? I knew you'd strike me some day. *He lets her go, stamping with rage at having forgotten himself, and recoils so hastily that he stumbles back into his seat on the ottoman.* Aha! Now I know how to deal with you. What a fool I was not to think of it before! You can't take away the knowledge you gave me. You said I had a finer ear than you. And I can be civil and kind to people, which is more than you can. Aha! That's done you, Henry Higgins, it has. Now I don't care that *snapping her fingers* for your bullying and your big talk. I'll advertize it in the papers that your duchess is only a flower girl that you taught, and that she'll teach anybody to be a duchess just the same in six months for a thousand guineas. Oh, when I think of myself crawling under your feet and being trampled on and called names, when all the time I had only to lift up my finger to be as good as you, I could just kick myself.

HIGGINS: *wondering at her* You damned impudent slut, you! But it's better than snivelling; better than fetching slippers and finding spectacles, isn't it? *Rising* By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this.

LIZA: Yes: You turn round and make up to me now that I'm not afraid of you, and can do without you.

HIGGINS: Of course I do, you little fool. Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now you're a tower of strength: a consort battleship. You and I and Pickering will be three old bachelors together instead of only two men and a silly girl.

Mrs. Higgins returns, dressed for the wedding. Eliza instantly becomes cool and elegant.

MRS. HIGGINS: The carriage is waiting, Eliza. Are you ready?

LIZA: Quite. Is the Professor coming?

MRS. HIGGINS: Certainly not. He can't behave himself in church. He makes remarks out loud all the time on the clergyman's pronunciation.

LIZA: Then I shall not see you again, Professor. Good bye. *She goes to the door.*

MRS. HIGGINS: *coming to Higgins* Good-bye, dear.

HIGGINS: Good-bye, mother. *He is about to kiss her, when he recollects something.* Oh, by the way, Eliza, order a ham and a Stilton cheese, will you? And buy me a pair of reindeer gloves, number eights, and a tie to match that new suit of mine, at Eale & Binman's. You can choose the color. *His cheerful, careless, vigorous voice shows that he is incorrigible.*

LIZA: *disdainfully* Buy them yourself. *She sweeps out/*

MRS. HIGGINS: I'm afraid you've spoiled that girl, Henry. But never mind, dear: I'll buy you the tie and gloves.

HIGGINS: *sunnily* Oh, don't bother. She'll buy em all right enough. Good-bye.

They kiss. Mrs. Higgins runs out. Higgins, left alone, rattles his cash in his pocket; chuckles; and disports himself in a highly self-satisfied manner.

Le note di scena sono tra parentesi *quadre* o *(tonde).*

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