

ACT ONE**Scene 3***HIGGINS' STUDY*

There is a staircase at one side leading up to a landing, a window looking out over the city, two downstairs doors, and much recording apparatus, including three turntables, a central switch for all three, large old-fashioned horns about, and a xylophone. There is a bird-cage UC.

TIME: The next day.

AT RISE: The room is in total darkness.

The vowel sounds into which the cries at DOOLITTLE in the preceding scene have segued, continue. After a bit more of these sounds, PICKERING's voice is heard, from the direction of the wing chair DR)

PICKERING

I say, Higgins, couldn't we turn on the lights?

HIGGINS

Nonsense, you hear much better in the dark.

PICKERING

But it's a fearful strain listening to all those vowel sounds. I'm quite done up for this afternoon.

(MRS. PEARCE appears in the UC door)

MRS. PEARCE

Mr. Higgins, are you there?

HIGGINS

What is it Mrs. Pearce?

(HE turns down the volume of the machine)

MRS. PEARCE

A young woman wants to see you, sir.

HIGGINS

(Turns machine off)

A young woman!

(X to light switch UC)

What does she want?

(Snaps on lights)

Has she an interesting accent?

MRS. PEARCE

Oh, something dreadful, sir.

HIGGINS

(To PICKERING)

Let's have her up. Show her up, Mrs. Pearce.

MRS. PEARCE

Very well, sir. It's for you to say.

(SHE Exits UC door)

HIGGINS

(Xes to desk, gets book and pencil)

This is rather a bit of luck. I'll show you how I make records. We'll set her talking; and I'll take her down in Bell's Visible Speech; then in Broad Romic;

(X to C machine, gets cylinder and puts it in roller in machine)

and then we'll get her on the phonograph so that you can turn her on as often as you like with the written transcript before you.

(HIGGINS Xes back to desk, PICKERING rises by R of wing chair waiting for the girl)

MRS. PEARCE

(Enters, stands by R of door)

This is the young woman, sir.

(ELIZA enters, nods to PICKERING, looks about room in awe as HIGGINS Xes to HER for a closer look)

HIGGINS

Oh, no!... this is the girl I jotted down last night. She's no use: I've got all the records I want of the Lisson Grove lingo; and I'm not going to waste another cylinder on it.

(HE pulls the cylinder out of the machine, places it down, Xes to desk)

Be off with you; I don't want you!

(After throwing book and pencil on desk, HE Xes up into library, gets charts, and studies them)

ELIZA

(X to L of sofa)

Don't you be so saucy. You ain't heard what I come for yet.

(To MRS. PEARCE)

Did you tell him I come in a taxi?

MRS. PEARCE

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

ELIZA

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

HIGGINS

(Xing D to L of HER)

Good enough for what?

ELIZA

(Turning to HIM)

Good enough for you. Now you know, don't ya? I've come to have lessons, I have. And to pay for them, too, make no mistake.

HIGGINS

(X to behind desk, puts charts down, sits)

Well!!! What do you expect me to say?

ELIZA

If you was a gentleman, you might ask me to sit down, I think. Don't I tell you I'm bringing you business?

HIGGINS

(Calling across room)

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

ELIZA

Aooooow! I won't be called a baggage when I've offered to pay like any lady.

PICKERING

But what is it you want?

ELIZA

(X D to front of sofa. To PICKERING)

I want to be a lady in a flower shop instead of sellin' flowers at the corner of Tottenham Court Road. But then won't take me unless I can talk more genteel. He said he could teach me. Well, here I am ready to pay — not askin' any favor — and he treats me as if I was dirt. I know what lessons cost, and I'm ready to pay.

HIGGINS

(Xing to L of HER)

How much?

ELIZA

(Turning to HIM)

Now you're talkin'! I thought you'd come off it when you saw a chance of getting back a bit of what you chucked at me last night. You'd had a drop in, hadn't ya?

HIGGINS

Sit down.

ELIZA

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

HIGGINS

(Xes to desk, gets pad and pencil again)

Sit down.

(Xes to C machine, puts cylinder on roller, and turns machine on)

PICKERING

(X to R of ELIZA)

What is your name?

ELIZA

Eliza Doolittle.

PICKERING

Won't you sit down, Miss Doolittle?

ELIZA

Oh, I don't mind if I do.

(SHE sits on sofa)

HIGGINS

(Pantomiming to PICKERING that the recording machine is on, Xes D to L of sofa)

How much do you propose to pay me for the lessons?

ELIZA

Oh, I know what's right. A lady friend of mine gets French lessons for heightenpence an hour from a real French gentleman. Well, you wouldn't have the face to ask me the same for teaching me my own language as you would for French; so I won't give more than a shilling. Take it or leave it.

HIGGINS

(Xes behind sofa to L of PICKERING)

You know, Pickering, if you consider a shilling, not as a simple shilling, but as a percentage of this girl's income, it works out as fully equivalent to sixty or seventy pounds from a millionaire. By George, it's the biggest offer I ever had.

ELIZA

(Rises, in great amazement)

Sixty pounds! What are you talkin' about? I never offered you sixty pounds! Where would I get...

HIGGINS

Oh, hold your tongue.

ELIZA

(Close to tears)

But I ain't got sixty pounds. Oh...

MRS. PEARCE

Dont' cry, you silly girl. Sit down. Nobody is going to touch your money.

HIGGINS

Somebody is going to touch you with a broomstick, if you don't stop snivelling. Now, sit down.

(ELIZA sits)

ELIZA

Aooooow! One would think you was my father!

(SHE characteristically wipes HER sleeve over HER nose)

HIGGINS

(Xing behind to L of sofa)

If I decide to teach you, I'll be worse than two fathers to you. Here—

(HE Offers HER HIS silk handkerchief)

ELIZA

What's this for?

HIGGINS

To wipe your eyes. To wipe any part of your face that feels moist. Remember:

(Pointing to each)

That's your handkerchief; and that's your sleeve. Don't mistake the one for the other if you wish to become a lady in a shop.

(X to front of desk)

PICKERING

(X behind sofa to R of HIGGINS)

Higgins, I'm interested. What about your boast that you could pass her off as a duchess at the Embassy Ball? I'll say you're the greatest teacher alive if you can make that good.

(HIGGINS in thought, throws pad and pencil on desk, Xes DL, PICKERING follows)

I'll bet you all the expenses of the experiment you can't do it. And I'll even pay for the lessons.

ELIZA

Oh, you're real good. Thank you, Captain.

HIGGINS

(X to behind sofa)

It's almost irresistible. She's so deliciously low —

(X to R of sofa)

so horribly dirty!

ELIZA

Aooooow! I ain't dirty: I washed my face and hands afore I come, I did.

HIGGINS

I'll take it! I'll make a duchess of this draggled-tailed guttersnipe!

ELIZA

Aooooow!

HIGGINS

I'll start today; now! this moment!

(Pulls HER up, passes HER to MRS. PEARCE)

Take her away, and clean her, Mrs. Pearce. Sandpaper if it won't come off any other way. Is there a good fire in the kitchen?

MRS. PEARCE

Yes: but—

HIGGINS

Take all her clothes off and burn them. Ring up and order some new ones. Wrap her up in brown paper 'till they come.

ELIZA

(X to R of HIGGINS)

You're no gentleman, you're not, to talk of such things. I'm a good girl, I am; and I know what the likes of you are, I do.

HIGGINS

We want none of your slum prudery here, young woman. You've got to learn to behave like a duchess. Take her away, Mrs. Pearce.

(Pushes ELIZA to MRS. PEARCE DR)

If she gives you any trouble, wallop her.

ELIZA

I'll call the police, I will!

MRS. PEARCE

But I've no place to put her.

HIGGINS

(X UC, removes record from machine)

Put her in the dustbin.

ELIZA

Aooooow!

PICKERING

Oh come, Higgins! Be reasonable.

MRS. PEARCE

(X to R of sofa)

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

HIGGINS

(Turns front)

I walk over everybody? My dear Mrs. Pearce, my dear Pickering. I never had the slightest intention of walking over anybody. All I propose is that we should be kind to this poor girl. If I did not express myself clearly it was because I did not wish to hurt her delicacy, or yours.

MRS. PEARCE

But, sir, you cant' take a girl up like that as if you were picking up a pebble on the beach.

HIGGINS

Why not?

MRS. PEARCE

Why not? But you don't know anything about her! What about her parents?

(Turns to ELIZA)

She may be married.

ELIZA

(Front)

Garn!

HIGGINS

There! As the girl very properly says: Garn!

ELIZA

(Giggling)

Who'd marry me?

HIGGINS

(X to L of ELIZA)

By George, Eliza, the streets will be strewn with the bodies of men shooting themselves for your sake before I've done with you.

ELIZA

Here! I'm goin' away! He's off his chump, he is.

(SHE Xes to UC door)

I don't want no balmies teachin' me.

HIGGINS

(Xes behind wing chair, and U to door)

Oh, indeed! I'm mad, am I? Very well, Mrs. Pearce, you needn't order the new clothes for her.

(HE snatches HIS handkerchief back, Xes D to wing chair)

Throw her out!

MRS. PEARCE

Stop, Mr. Higgins! I won't allow it. Go home to your parents, girl.

ELIZA

I ain't got no parents.

HIGGINS

There you are. "She ain't got no parents." What's all the fuss about? The girl doesn't belong to anybody, and she's no use to anybody but me. Take her upstairs and —

MRS. PEARCE

But what's to become of her? Is she to be paid anything? Oh, do be sensible, sir.

HIGGINS

What on earth will she want with money? She'll have her food and her clothes. She'll only drink if you give her money.

ELIZA

(X to L of HIGGINS)

Oh, you are a brute. It's a lie; nobody ever saw the sign of liquor on me.

(To PICKERING, taking step to HIM)

Oh, sir, you're a gentleman; don't let him speak to me like that!

PICKERING

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

HIGGINS

Oh, no, I don't think so.

(Puts glasses on and peers at HER)

Oh, no! No! Not any feelings that we need bother about. Have you, Eliza?

MRS. PEARCE

Mr. Higgins. I must know on what terms the girl is to be here. What is to become of her when you've finished your teaching? You must look ahead a little, sir.

HIGGINS

What's to become of her if I leave her in the gutter? Answer me that, Mrs. Pearce?

MRS. PEARCE

That's her own business, not yours, Mr. Higgins.

HIGGINS

Well, when I've done with her, we can throw her back into the gutter, and then it will be her own business again; so that's all right.

ELIZA

Oh, you've no feelin' heart in you: you don't care for nothing but yourself. Here! I've had enough of this. I'm going.

(SHE starts to the UC door, HIGGINS leaps on the platform and grabs HER arm)

HIGGINS

Eliza!

(Leads HER down to below secretary, takes chocolates off mantel, holds them before HER)

Have some chocolates.

ELIZA

How do I know what might be in them? I've heard of girls being drugged by the like of you.

HIGGINS

Pledge of good faith, Eliza. I eat one half...

(HE does)

you eat the other.

(SHE opens her mouth in retort, HIGGINS stuffs the chocolate in HER mouth)

You shall have boxes of them, barrels of them, every day. You shall live on them, eh?

ELIZA

(Speaking with a mouthful)

I wouldn't have ate it, only I'm too ladylike to take it out of me mouth.

HIGGINS

(Leading HER up the stairs)

Think of it, Eliza. Think of chocolates, and taxis, and gold, and diamonds.

ELIZA

(At top of balcony. MRS. PEARCE X to front of wing chair)

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

PICKERING

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

HIGGINS

(HE walks a few steps in thought and turns to HER suddenly)

Eliza; you are to stay here for the next six months learning how to speak beautifully, like a lady in a florist's shop. If you're good and do whatever you're told, you shall sleep in a proper bedroom and have lots to eat, and money to buy chocolates and take rides in taxis. If you're naughty and idle you will sleep in the back kitchen among the black beetles, and be walloped by Mrs. Pearce with a broomstick. At the end of six months you shall go to Buckingham Palace in a carriage, beautifully dressed. If the King finds out you're not a lady, you will be taken by the Police to the Tower of London where your head will be cut off as a warning to other presumptuous flower girls. If you are not found out, you shall have a present of seven-and-six to start life with as a lady in a shop. If you refuse this offer you will be the most ungrateful, wicked girl; and the angels will weep for you.

(To PICKERING)

Now are you satisfied, Pickering?

(PICKERING turns upstage with a hopeless shrug.)

To MRS. PEARCE)

Could I put it more plainly or fairly, Mrs. Pearce?

MRS. PEARCE

(Xing U stairs to upper balcony)

Come with me, Eliza.

HIGGINS

(Opening door)

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

ELIZA

You're a great bully, you are. I won't stay here if I don't like. And I won't let nobody wallop me.

MRS. PEARCE

(Xing to behind ELIZA, puts arm on HER shoulder)

Don't answer back, girl.

ELIZA

(As SHE goes)

If I'd known what I was lettin' myself in for, I wouldn't have come up here. I've always been a good girl and I won't be put upon...

(And SHE is gone with MRS. PEARCE.)

PICKERING X to R of wing chair)

HIGGINS

(HIGGINS immediately closes the door and turns to PICKERING enthusiastically. Xing D stairs)

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. I'll make a Queen of that barbarous wretch.

(HIGGINS has Xed into the library, picks up some more charts and studies them intently)

PICKERING

Higgins, forgive the bluntness, but if I'm to be in this business, I shall feel responsible for the girl. I hope it's clearly understood that no advantage is to be taken of her position.

HIGGINS

(Not even looking up)

What? That thing? Sacred, I assure you.

PICKERING

Now come, Higgins, you know what I mean! This is no trifling matter! Are you a man of good character where women are concerned?