

PYGMALION CONTINUED

By John McInerney

Time: Spring, 1920, Place: Wimpole Street, London

The first scene takes place in front of the curtain, and the program has informed the audience that the space is intended in this case to represent a hallway in Higgins' home. Col. Pickering is standing in front of an old-fashioned box telephone mounted on a partial flat positioned far stage right. He is holding the receiver to his ear, and we hear what he does: the sound of a telephone ringing "on the other end." After several rings, we and he hear a woman's voice:

WOMAN'S VOICE

The Frederick Hill residence, good morning.

COL. PICKERING

Good morning. I'd like to speak to Mrs. Hill, please.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Whom should I say is calling?

COL. PICKERING

Col. Pickering.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Just a moment, please.

After a brief moment of silence, we hear another woman's voice, that of Eliza Doolittle Hill:

ELIZA

Hello, Col. I got your note, and I believe I can come to see you this afternoon about your niece.

I can certainly sympathize with her situation. The war left far too many women facing problems like that. I'm not sure I can be of any real help, but we should all try.

COL. PICKERING

Yes, we should. So, thank you very much in advance, Eliza. What time should we expect you?

ELIZA

Well, I'm just about to go off in the motor car on several errands for the business. It's nice that some of our clients, especially the ones who are new to "entertaining," want advice about arranging teas and such, not just about the flowers, but it does take up more time. Still, I should

be finished by about two o'clock or so. I'll have Mrs. Anderson ring you when I'm sure.

COL. PICKERING

That will be fine. We'll see you soon, then.

ELIZA

By the way, Col., is ... is Higgins any better, do you think?

COL. PICKERING

No, Eliza, I'm afraid he isn't. Oh, sometimes I see a flash of the old Higgins for a few moments, but they just don't last. And that's worrisome.

ELIZA

Yes. Yes, it is. Well, one problem at a time, right? First, your niece. Goodbye for now.

COL. PICKERING

Goodbye.

Pickering hangs up the receiver, and walks off the stage. End of Scene One

Act One, Scene Two

Later that afternoon, as the curtains open, we see Higgins' study, and Higgins and Pickering are comfortably occupied in it. Pickering is reading a book, and Higgins is reading what seems to be transcripts of voice recordings. After a quiet moment, we hear the old fashioned box telephone ringing off stage: one ring, then two more, and more. Pickering says:

PICKERING

Shouldn't one of us answer that?

HIGGINS

Oh, Mrs. Pearce will get it. I think she rather likes the telephone, another new thing to master.

PICKERING

Well, she must be busy upstairs. Whoever is calling will probably want to speak to one of us, not to her. We could save her a few steps. (*He starts to get to his feet.*)

HIGGINS

(*Waving his hand to signal Pickering to sit down again*) No, no. That would be interfering in her

domain. She's convinced that she runs this household, and we don't want to disturb the conviction.

The ringing stops.

PICKERING

I daresay it could be called a fact.

HIGGINS

Perhaps, perhaps. But in any case, I don't think either of us will like it if Mrs. Pearce starts expecting us to answer the telephone. I know whenever I do have to "take a call," my first inclination is to say, "Don't bother me!" and hang up. I sometimes manage to be a little more polite than that, but most of the time the caller makes me wish I had been rude instead. Don't you agree?

PICKERING

Well, not entirely, but Mrs. Pearce has apparently answered the telephone, and we'll soon know who is calling.

HIGGINS

Hmm. Are you expecting a call?

PICKERING

(Smiling a little mysteriously) Perhaps, perhaps. One can never be sure about such things.

Mrs. Pearce enters from stage right.

MRS. PEARCE

Gentlemen, that was Eliza's housekeeper calling. She says that Eliza got through her errands sooner than she expected, and she's on her way here now.

HIGGINS

Eliza's housekeeper! Those words still seem like they ought to finish a phrase like, "as unlikely as ..."

MRS. PEARCE

Well, sir, she may still be Eliza to us, but to everyone else, she's Mrs. Frederick Hill.

PICKERING

And her business is so successful now that she needs to have a housekeeper.

HIGGINS

I know that, and I take pride in her achievements. So should you, Pickering, and you too, Mrs. Pearce. But does the warning from the housekeeper mean that Eliza arranged this visit in advance?

PICKERING

Actually, I asked her to visit us this afternoon. I want to consult her about a situation in my family.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh sir! Is everyone all right?

HIGGINS

You need to consult Eliza about your family?

PICKERING

Actually, I want to talk to you and Mrs. Pearce, as well as Eliza.

I'm concerned about my niece, Ellen. Her husband was killed in the war, as you know, and now she has to raise two small children. She sent me a letter a few days ago from her home in Surrey.

MRS. PEARCE

Is she all alone and needing help?

HIGGINS

Does she need money?

PICKERING

Well, she actually has all the financial support she needs, from my brother and from her own parents, and the problem is that she has too much help from them. She says there are too many relatives who come to stay with her and they all keep giving her conflicting advice. Evidently, the pressure from them is even worse than her grief. She wants to know if I can help her sort things out.

HIGGINS

But what useful advice could the three of us, or Eliza, for heaven's sake, offer her?

PICKERING

Well, I want to talk to you and you, Mrs. Pearce, because I value your good judgement.

I know how to deal with my brother, and Eliza isn't a widow, but she is a young wife with a child and relatives to cope with. I thought she would understand Ellen's situation.

HIGGINS

Yes, that's true enough, I suppose. Eliza does have to cope with Freddy's family, and with Freddy as well.

MRS. PEARCE

Sir, I think we should all remember that Freddy, I mean Mr. Frederick, was a hero in the war.

HIGGINS

He did receive a medal; that much I give him credit for. Whether that makes him easier or harder for Eliza to live with is an open question, and I have no interest in pursuing it. ... And of course Eliza must also cope with Frederick Hill the third. About three now, isn't he? Incidentally, I find it amusing that her pet name for him is Henry. I'm not sure I want to know why.

During the speech above, Eliza, looking very smart in a 1919 style dress, has entered silently from stage right, and is standing near Mrs. Pearce. She says:

ELIZA

Because even when he was a small baby, he was happily determined to do everything **his** way.

There is a moment of response from everyone else, including brief chuckles from all, even Higgins, and then greetings (eg. Hello, Eliza, Eliza!, Glad you're here, my dear!)

HIGGINS

(Amused, teasing) A very timely entrance. Did you wait for a good cue line?

While Higgins delivers this line, Eliza moves quickly into the room, greeting Mrs. Pearce and Pickering with quick hugs. When she finally stands in front of Higgins, she smiles broadly and extends her hand for him to shake, and says:

ELIZA

No, but that was a wonderful bit of luck, wasn't it? *(They shake hands cordially and Eliza moves to sit down in a chair near Higgins and Pickering. Mrs. Pearce sits in a chair a little nearer the entrance.)*

HIGGINS

Indeed! But now tell us: how is little Freddy, or Henry?

ELIZA

Very well, thank you. This afternoon, he's off to the zoo with his father.

PICKERING

Oh, I'm sure he'll enjoy that, and so will Freddy, I'll wager.

HIGGINS

Commendably paternal of Freddy to be sure.

ELIZA

Yes, he regrets that his father died before he really got to know him, so he wants to make sure he is close to little Freddy right from the start.

MRS. PEARCE

And I believe it will be good for Mr. Frederick to have a nice peaceful outing. I understand that doctors and psychologists and such say it's important for the soldiers to occupy themselves with things that will help them forget those terrible memories they have.

ELIZA

Oh Freddy does have his share of bad memories, but he tries to bury them by keeping very busy. Well, you know he manages the financial side of our business, and he and I work together on recruiting clients. And lately he's gotten involved in organizations that are trying to help veterans in need. Really, so many of them are in terrible shape.

PICKERING

Is his recuperation still coming along all right?

ELIZA

Well his right arm still isn't back to normal yet, but it is getting better. He keeps exercising it every day, God knows. And once in a while the damage from the gassing gives him trouble, but it doesn't happen nearly as often as it did when he first came home. ... Thanks for asking, Colonel. Now, shouldn't we ... talk about your niece?

COLONEL PICKERING

Oh yes, of course. Uh, you know the general situation. Do you have any first thoughts?

ELIZA

Well, I do have some more questions. First, I think I'd like to know a little more about Ellen. How ... how would you describe her as a person? What would you say about her if you forgot for a moment that she is your favorite relative, and you are a beloved uncle?

PICKERING

Hmmm. I would say that she is a very attractive young woman, very agreeable, good company, well brought up, with very good manners.

ELIZA

Would you say then that she has always been ... sheltered, taken care of?

PICKERING

Yes, she has two brothers, but no sister, and she was the youngest child, a great favorite in the family.

ELIZA

That says to me that she grew up pleasing everyone in the family, doing what she was told, and she went from the security of her father's house to the security of her husband's house. Am I right?

PICKERING

Yes, and her husband was quite smitten by her, and very protective.

HIGGINS

This is what comes from raising young women as if they were hothouse plants. When they have to leave the hothouse, or as in this case, when the hothouse gets too hot, they don't know how to thrive. Of course, this happens primarily to girls from "fine families," upper class or upper class imitators. Eliza, your upbringing, as bad as it was, at least taught you to stand up for yourself and make your own decisions.

ELIZA

Yes, but I don't think that ability was nearly as important to me as the stroke of pure good luck I had the night I met you and Colonel Pickering, ... even if I didn't always think so at times. Now I don't even want to think about what my life would have been like without that luck. Odds are that I would either be still selling flowers on the street or dead, done in by a disease I couldn't get treated, or by some bloke who didn't like "feisty" flower girls.

PICKERING,

But Ellen does need to take charge of her own life and her own children. She can't go on agreeing with one relative today, and another one tomorrow, when their advice is contradictory.

MRS. PEARCE

I think people should mind their own business, unless they are asked for advice, and even then they should be very cautious in what they say. And relatives are the worst! Just because someone is your cousin or your nephew or your aunt or something, doesn't mean they own you!

HIGGINS

And no pompous relative should ever try to boss Mrs. Pearce around again!

MRS PEARCE

I ... I'm sorry for bursting out like that.

HIGGINS

Nonsense. Everyone's entitled to a rant now and then. We shouldn't always keep our grudges all bottled up inside. But tell us: who was it that harassed you so aggravatingly? A know-it-all mother-in-law?

MRS. PEARCE

No, my know- it- all older sister Marjorie. She never, ever missed a chance to tell me what she thought I was doing wrong, and how she was doing it better! ... God forgive me for speaking ill of the dead!

PICKERING

Oh Mrs. Pearce, I wish Ellen would summon the nerve to rant to my brother and her mother-in-law and the rest of her interfering relatives. She needs to tell them all to back off!

ELIZA

What are they bullying her about?

PICKERING

Religion, for one thing. Her husband was a Catholic, so before the marriage, she had to promise that the children would be raised Catholic. Well now, my brother is saying that Ellen takes the children to the Catholic church too often, and he's demanding equal time for the C of E! Him! He has to introduce himself to his vicar every Christmas.

HIGGINS

I suspect every experienced vicar understands that the most militant Christians in his Congregation are the ones he seldom sees in the pews. They don't want to risk losing their fighting edge by hearing too much of the "turn the other cheek" and "love thy enemy" pieties.

PICKERING

And Ellen's husband's people want her to pack up and move closer to them. And they all criticize her for the way she does or does not discipline the children!

HIGGINS

I suppose they think she's spoiling them.

PICKERING

Oh yes, but she says the children (two little boys) are just two and four years old. Of course they get noisy and whiny and mischievous from time to time, but she maintains that they are not out of control.

ELIZA

Well I have just one, of course, but I've discovered a nearly foolproof way of getting my little Henry out of a naughty mood. I give him a big hug, tell him he doesn't need to misbehave because he's

the best boy in England, and then I tickle him.

MRS. PEARCE

Why Eliza! What a clever mother you are!

ELIZA

I've also discovered that, with a few variations, the same approach works on his father too.

There are smiles and chuckles and murmurings of "Oh my!" in response

PICKERING

Well! I certainly will pass along that ... strategy to Ellen, but it's clear to me that she really has to assert herself consistently with the children, yes, but especially to the relatives from both families.

ELIZA

And do you think she's capable to learning to do that?

PICKERING

Right now, I'd have to say no, I don't think so.

ELIZA

Oh, but you, and all of us, shouldn't give up on her too soon. Look what happened to our Freddy. When I married him, he loved me extravagantly, and he was the most genial man in the world, but he didn't seem capable of doing anything, as you were fond of pointing out, Henry. Well, then he went off to the war, and when he wound up in a unit that was understaffed, he was given officer training, just because he was the only "gentleman" available. And then, for the first time in his life, he was required to do many things, and to make decisions when necessary for the other men. What's more, his superiors clearly assumed he could do the job. Remember what I told you, Henry, years ago when we were arguing about what had happened to me? I said, "The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated." It turns out I was right, and not just about me. Because he was treated like a good officer, Freddy became one. It didn't happen overnight, of course, but it did happen, and more quickly than anyone who knew him before the war could have imagined. Perhaps Ellen could have the same kind of transformation,

Colonel.

PICKERING

Oh, I hope so. But what or who is going to prod her or push her into finding her strength? That's the question I keep asking myself.

HIGGINS

Well the answer has to come from Ellen. As you've said yourself, no one can do for her what has to be done. She will either summon the will to assert herself or she won't.

PICKERING

Mmmm. She seems to think I could help get things moving in the right direction.

HIGGINS

You! What in Heaven's name does she think you could do?

PICKERING

Well, she thinks I could motivate her. (sigh) The fact is, she has asked me to come and stay with her and be a referee with the rest of the family, and a kind of coach for her.

HIGGINS

Oh, Pickering! That's a trap. A trap for you! All the relatives will soon regard you as her ventriloquist. Whatever she says or does will make some of them unhappy, and they will blame you! In short order, they will **all** regard you as an interfering, irritating obstacle.

PICKERING

Oh come now, Higgins! Yes, I will be in an awkward position, but if I take care just to support and encourage Ellen, and keep my own opinions to myself, I think I might be able to do more good than harm.

MRS. PEARCE

Colonel, I ... I'm sure you would be very diplomatic indeed, but ... well ... from what I've seen over the years ... Mr. Higgins is exaggerating again, but he's basically right about what happens to anybody who steps into the middle of a family dispute.

ELIZA

I agree with you, Mrs. Pearce.

PICKERING

I ... I can see why all of you are probably right. To be honest, I thought the same thing when I finished reading the letter. But now, I keep thinking about Ellen, so alone, so fragile. I just keep asking myself, how can I abandon her?

ELIZA

Oh! I didn't think of that. Colonel, do you ... do you think you could ever forgive yourself if you don't go to help Ellen, and she doesn't find her own way?

PICKERING

I ... I'm not sure I could, Eliza.

ELIZA

Well, that makes me change my mind. Maybe you do have to say yes to her, for your sake as well as hers.

HIGGINS

Pardon me, Eliza, but that's nonsense. We just agreed that Pickering should not insert himself into that situation, because it would very likely make things worse for everyone involved. So why should he feel permanently guilty about doing the right thing? I don't believe any regret he might have would last more than a week.

MRS. PEARCE

With respect, Mr. Higgins, aren't you assuming you and Col. Pickering have the same temperament? My experience ... suggests that's not true.

ELIZA

Bravo, Mrs. Pearce! An uncomfortable truth served up on a word cushion. But let me add a suggestion that might make Professor Higgins feel more positive about Col. Pickering going off to Surrey. He's right, of course, when he insists that Ellen will finally have to solve the problem herself, and he's right to worry that it would be dangerous for her to get in the habit of relying on the Colonel. So, Col., why don't you just set a time limit on your stay there,

say 6 weeks or something like that.

We now hear the sound of a door bell ringing. Mrs. Pearce rises and heads for the entrance, saying:

MRS. PEARCE

I'll see who that is.

COL. PICKERING

By Jove, Eliza, a capital idea, capital! And I'll have to make sure Ellen knows what the time limit is.

HIGGINS

I'm sorry to puncture your diplomacy, Eliza. I'm sure they could have used you in Paris a while ago. But we must consider what will surely happen when the Colonel's deadline for departure looms, especially if Ellen knows it's coming. She'll have come up with a half dozen perfectly plausible reasons why it should be pushed back a little, or better yet, postponed indefinitely. And then, when he finally insists on a new deadline, just imagine the storm of tears and entreaties he'll face. Old friend, I know how tender hearted you are, particularly when it comes to the fair sex. (What a misnomer that is!) Anyway, I don't believe you could tear yourself away.

COL. PICKERING

Steady now, Higgins. You don't know me as well as you think you do. Before I settled in here with you, I spent years in India and other places. And I encountered more than one ... episode that required me to be ... firm with ... entreating ladies.

Speechless for once, Higgins turns toward Pickering with his mouth open in surprise. After a beat, he ends the awkward silence by saying:

HIGGINS

Well! That leaves me tantalized and scandalized at the same time! I don't think I want to pursue this subject at the present time. I ... uh, I suppose then that I just have to ask how soon you plan to leave for Surrey. *(This last line is delivered in a distinctly melancholy manner.)*

During the speech above, Mrs. Pearce reappears, standing in the stage right entrance. She says:

MRS. PEARCE

Mr. Higgins, Mr. Alfred Doolittle is here. He apologizes for not making an appointment in

advance, but he wonders if he could speak to you in your professional capacity for a moment.

HIGGINS

In my professional capacity? Alfie Doolittle? Will wonders never cease! Send him in Mrs. Pearce. Eliza, will your two Freddie's be stopping by next?

ELIZA

That would be a surprise to me, but my father coming here has already surprised me!

Alfred Doolittle enters from stage right, Mrs. Pearce having preceded him, and moved upstage somewhat. Doolittle, the former dustman, who, in a bizarre chain of improbable events, was suddenly raised from cheerful poverty to harassed middle class financial security by a legacy from an American millionaire, who was assured by a whimsical letter from Henry Higgins that Doolittle was the most original moralist in England, strides confidently into the room, beaming genially at everyone. Gone is the frustrated man we saw in the final act of PYGMALION; there's no more of that man's frustration with middle class obligations and little of his longing for the freedom from such things he enjoyed as a poor dustman. He has obviously made his peace with the new status thrust upon him when he was seduced by the prospect of a steady, comfortable income. However, he still sounds like a colorful, vigorous Cockney.

DOOLITTLE

Afternoon, Professor, Colonel. Hullo! Eliza! I didn't know you'd be here too. Well, how are ya?

How are the hero and my grandson?

Eliza's attitude toward her father has evolved from justified resentment to toleration and cautious civility.

ELIZA

They're fine, Dad. And I didn't expect to see you here either.

HIGGINS

Well, Alfred! I haven't seen you in quite a while. You're looking more prosperous than ever.

I'm told you no longer blame me for that.

DOOLITTLE

Oh, I've gone way past that, Henry. I even feel comfortable calling you by your Christian name. Of course, every now and then I still miss the freedom I had in them old days, but you get used to the comfort of not worryin' about much of anything. Now I can eat whatever I want, whenever I want. I can even drink whatever I want, whenever I want, and that's even better. And, I have to say, I am now a courageous capitalist.

HIGGINS

Indeed! And just what does that mean, Alfred?

DOOLITTLE

A few years ago, I was brave enough to make some investments, even though people told me I was taking a crazy risk. I got lucky on one of them and made a bundle. Then I had the courage to quit investing, and enjoy what I have.

HIGGINS

I'd just call you a smart man. I understand you're also still lecturing to the moral reform society.

DOOLITTLE

Twice a year. Sometimes three or four times, just like old Mister Wannafeller said I should. Bless their hearts, the reformers spoil me.

HIGGINS

With applause? You've gotten to like applause, eh?

DOOLITTLE

Yes, the applause is nice, but the listening is what I like the best. They really listen to what I say, even when it's bullplucky.

PICKERING

Do you mean they don't know when you're just giving them Bullplucky?

DOOLITTLE

No, they usually do know. And then they push me to be honest and say what I really think, even when that turns out to be a little scary, to them and to me.

PICKERING

Well, the day we first met you, Higgins and I noticed you had a gift for rhetoric. Now you're putting it to good use.

DOOLITTLE

Right you are, Colonel! And I want to put that gift to even better use. That's why I'm here, Henry. I hope I'll be just as good a pupil as Eliza was.

HIGGINS

Oh Lord, what a fascinating student you'd be, Alfred! However, I ... I'm afraid it's not possible for me to take you on. You see, I would need months of intense work to wean you away from your Cockney speech, and replace it with a posh vocabulary and accent, and I ... I'm just not up to it now.

DOOLITTLE

Oh hang on a moment!! I don't want you to change the way I talk. They say my "man of the people" sound is just what I need to keep.

ELIZA

Dad, who is "they"? What are you up to?

DOOLITTLE

I've been taken up by Tory politicians! Don't that just beat all? They're "grooming me," they say, to run for a seat in Parliament.

ELIZA

But you don't know anything about politics. I don't think you've ever even voted before, have you?

DOOLITTLE

Yes, I voted in the last by-election in my district, and one time before that. And lately I've been keeping up with what's going on in politics. I even read the TIMES yesterday.

HIGGINS

But why on earth would you side with the Tories? They're the voice of "middle class morality," as you used to call it.

DOOLITTLE

That's what they say, but when it comes to passing laws or not passing laws, they mostly want to leave people alone and let them do what they think best with their money, not have to pay taxes for this or that "do gooder scheme." Not like this Lloyd George bloke, the Prime Minister. He put in "health insurance for all" that takes money out of our pockets, and God knows what he'll

come up with next. He's Welsh, you know, and their heads can be stuck in the clouds.

HIGGINS

You're partly Welsh yourself, Alfred, on your Mother's side. I said that the first time I heard you speak.

DOOLITTLE

Of course. That's how I know about the Welsh.

ELIZA

Dad, are you sure you can trust these politicians? Maybe they're just flattering you to get your money.

DOOLITTLE

Oh no. I made sure that the Tories are putting up all the money. They will even pay you, Henry, for "consulting" with me.

HIGGINS

But if you don't want me to change your speech, what will we be consulting about? Besides, I don't like the Tories. They're too hidebound for my taste.

DOOLITTLE

All I want you to do is to teach me how to put together a proper political speech. When I "lecture" for the moral reformers, I just pick a topic and ramble on, throwing in stories and jokes and whatever comes to mind. I've got to be more organized and definite to convince voters. I need to tighten up my rhetoric, isn't that what you called it? And I don't believe that kind of consulting will take too long. So, how about it, Henry? After all, you don't want me to embarrass Eliza and big Freddy and little Freddy by sounding like an old rummy every time I speak to a crowd, do you?

ELIZA

Dad! That's not fair. You're trying to use me and my family for emotional blackmail!

PICKERING

Well, you're putting Higgins in an uncomfortable position, but can we call that blackmail?

DOOLITTLE

Never mind what you call it! Is it working? Professor?

HIGGINS

(Sighs) It's going to be awkward for me whether I say no or yes. I think it might be more awkward for me to say no, so I suppose that means yes.

DOOLITTLE

Great! Wonderful! We can start in a half hour at Albert Hall. Lloyd George will be speaking to a big crowd there, and you can listen to him with me, and then explain how he does it.

HIGGINS

But you said you're against him!

DOOLITTLE

I am! But he's a wonder when he gives a speech. The last time I heard him, I'll be damned if he didn't half convince me he was right after all, for a few minutes anyway. And what he says is just half the effect. The rest is how he says it, the way he sounds. It must be the Welsh in him. If you can show me how he builds his speeches, and then how he trumpets them, I'll soon know how to get the crowds swooning myself. Remember, I'm half Welsh too!

HIGGINS

But you want to go now? Oh, I'm not prepared to go anywhere right now. I didn't know anything about Lloyd George speaking or what you wanted.

DOOLITTLE

What do you mean you're not prepared? What preparation do you need? All you have to do is walk out your front door and get into my brand new, shiny roadster. It's the latest thing. It will take us there in fifteen minutes!

PICKERING

I say, Higgins, let's go with him! A brand new roadster! It will be a lark.

HIGGINS

Well, if **you** want to go ... All right. I'll do it. But will we have room for Eliza?

ELIZA

Oh, no thank you, I must go home shortly, and remember, Mrs. Pearce is busy with dinner arrangements. You gentlemen go and have a good time, but be sure to be home in time for dinner.

Murmuring things like, "Well, let's be off then," "We'll need hats, I think," "Fifteen minutes you say?" Doolittle, Pickering, and Higgins hurry out the stage right entrance. Eliza follows them out the door.

END OF SCENE TWO

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

A few moments later, Mrs. Pearce appears in the entrance. She looks startled to find the room empty, wanders for a moment about the room, murmuring, "Well where have they all gone ... without a word?" A beat later Eliza appears in the doorway to say:

ELIZA

They are all off with my father to Albert Hall to listen to the Prime Minister.

MRS. PEARCE

The Prime Minister! Albert Hall! Bless my soul, what's next?

ELIZA

Don't worry: they'll be back in time for dinner. So now we have some time to ourselves to talk about Higgins. The Colonel says he's not improving.

MRS. PEARCE

No, I'm afraid not. He's still so ... subdued. So passive. Before, when he was practically bouncing around, and saying outrageous things, when I never knew what he was going to do next, I used to wish we had an ordinary, predictable, even boring day once in a while. Now we have too many dull days.

ELIZA

No clients coming in for him to work with, no projects going on?

MRS. PEARCE

He's been turning clients away. And he doesn't seem really interested in anything particular now. No spark in him. Why, I seldom even hear him swearing since his mother died!

ELIZA

Hmmm. Leave it to Henry Higgins to behave himself, and worry us all to distraction! Anyway, I agree with you: this ... decline all started after Mrs. Higgins passed.

MRS. PEARCE

Yes. At first, I thought he was just grieving, like anyone would, after a death in the family. But it's been about a year and a half now, and he shows no signs of getting back to normal.

ELIZA

My theory is: he didn't realize how much he depended on his mother.

MRS. PEARCE

Depended on her? It seemed to me he went out of his way to annoy her, poor woman!

ELIZA

But that's just it: he was like a little boy who always wants to test his mother, to see how much he can get away with, but he depends on her being there. As long as she is, he feels safe.

MRS. PEARCE

I see what you mean. And I do see that to him Mrs. Higgins represented what other people, the ordinary, "proper" people, thought, and what they expected, even from him. I think he perhaps wanted to keep that in mind, no matter what he said.

ELIZA

So, what or who can fill the ... the gap in his life? I think it has to be a woman.

MRS. PEARCE

A woman? But I never in my life met a man who was such a determined bachelor!

ELIZA

I know, I know! Still, I can't help but believe that he needs someone, and he wouldn't rely on a man the way he relied on his mother. He needs a woman.

MRS. PEARCE

Well neither you nor I will fill the bill!

ELIZA

Oh God no! In his mind, you are, and always will be, his trusted housekeeper, nothing more, nothing less. I am now his most significant achievement. I used to be nothing but a flower girl, and an ungrateful one at that, but especially in the last few years, he has come to see the way I live now as just his success, and that's what I'll always be to him. But I do have in mind a woman I think might hold his attention and resist being pigeon holed.

MRS. PEARCE

She must be a stunner, and a super strong woman if she can do that.

ELIZA

She is, I believe. Her name is Grace Mulhare. She's a war widow too, and I met her when we were both working with the women's suffrage movement. And I hope you won't mind: I sent my driver home so I could ask her to take me home in her car. I hoped that would be the pretext to introduce her to Henry, but maybe it will be better if she sees us and this home first, before she meets him. I telephoned her a moment ago, and she said she would drive over right away.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh, I don't mind at all. I'm anxious to meet this woman, And it will be better for her; forewarned is forearmed!

ELIZA

Right! She should be here any minute.

MRS. PEARCE

By the way, have you told this ... Grace woman what you have in mind for her?

ELIZA

Not exactly. She knows my history, so she knows what Henry Higgins did for me. She was fascinated by the whole process, and she did say she would like to meet him. I've told her about him, the unvarnished version, and she still wants to meet him! But I haven't told her I think the two of them should get together.

MRS. PEARCE

Well, I have yet to lay eyes on her, but I'm already hoping she is the right woman for Mr.

Higgins, and I'm already feeling guilty about what we may be putting her through!

At this point, we hear the sound of a doorbell. In response, there are indistinct voices heard offstage, and then we hear a woman's strong, clear voice: "Eliza! Mrs. Pearce! I'm Grace Mulhare! I've arrived with Eliza's ride home." Almost immediately then, the lady herself steps through the entrance. She is a very attractive woman, smartly but not ostentatiously dressed; she seems to be in her mid forties, but doesn't look matronly. Her face is animated by eyes that always seem to be brimming with good humor, and her voice and manner are confident, but not bossy or shrill. She gives the impression that she is ready to play a sensible, positive role in whatever situation she encounters. She says:

GRACE MULHARE

Pardon me for just barging in like this; the maid who answered the door immediately offered to announce me to you, but I didn't think we needed to be so formal. Hope you don't mind, Mrs. Pearce.

Incidentally, the girl seemed very eager to be correct and efficient. She must be new!

She then steps forward into the room to shake hands with Mrs. Pearce, saying, "I'm glad to meet you," and then turns to give Eliza a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

GRACE MULHARE

So, Professor Higgins and the other gentlemen are off listening to the Prime Minister. To me, he is very impressive when you're listening to him, but the spell doesn't last too long. Then you start wondering again how he can stand working with all those Tories. I'm curious to find out what the professor has to say about him.

ELIZA

Well, I'm still hoping to arrange an opportunity for you to ask him. I'm sorry our schedules didn't work out for today. Uh, as you know, we, Mrs. Pearce and I, are rather worried about Higgins.

GRACE MULHARE

Yes, so you said. He seems to be depressed lately, isn't that it? *(Her question seems to be directed to Mrs. Pearce.)*

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, but I'm afraid it's been more than just lately. It started over a year ago, after his mother died.

GRACE MULHARE

So he is one of those bachelors who didn't realize how much he depended on his mother until she was gone, right?

ELIZA

That's absolutely true. And you know, I think it will be good for him to meet you. If he gets to see how much you're doing to help veterans, and widows, and how much you do to help people in general adjust to the way the world is changing, it might start him thinking about what he could be doing.

GRACE MULHARE

Well I don't want to come charging into his home like an amazon who puts him to shame.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh, I'm glad to hear you say that. Mr. Higgins doesn't respond well to being pushed or shamed into anything.

GRACE MULHARE

No, I can just look around this room and see he isn't always open to change.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh, is it that obvious?

GRACE MULHARE

Well you can tell that a bachelor is in charge here. There's not a hint of a woman's touch. No family photographs in sight. No flowers to brighten up the place. Nothing in the furniture or on the walls to suggest 1920. I'm sure you've been frustrated by that, Mrs. Pearce.

MRS. PEARCE

No, not really, not anymore. I'm used to ignoring or coping with his crotchets and his oddities and his tempers.

GRACE MULHARE

You know, I've heard people say that very bright and headstrong men are like thoroughbred horses: very impressive and high spirited, but also skittish and hard to manage.

ELIZA

Hmm. There have been times when I've wanted to compare Henry Higgins to a particular part of any horse!

In response, all three women laugh.

GRACE MULHARE

A universal sentiment among women, Eliza, a universal sentiment. The older I get, and the more men I get to know, the more I believe the most important reason why men act like that end of the horse is that they are obsessed with proving themselves. It starts when they are very young, doesn't it? They need to prove how tough they are on the playground, how smart they are in school, then how successful they are in their careers. They even want to prove themselves to us, right? They want us to believe that they are strong husbands, good providers, even successful lovers, all the time!

MRS. PEARCE

And when they find out that they need our help, for **all** those things, they get irritated – at us!
(Again, the women laugh.)

GRACE MULHARE

So we have to learn to boost their confidence and feed their egos, sort of behind the scenes, so they don't have to admit that we're doing it --- not even to themselves.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh yes, we should never let men realize how often we wind up running their lives.

ELIZA

True enough, true enough. But sometimes men can change, and then we have to change too. The Freddie who went off to the war, was not the same man who came back from it. Before the war, he was really a lovely boy, and he was happy to let me manage his life. After the war, even while he was recuperating, he was a man who had his own opinions, and he wanted to make decisions for himself. He even had ideas on how to raise little Freddie. So, "my baby" has had to become "our son."

GRACE MULHARE

Has that been difficult for you, Eliza?

ELIZA

It was at first, but now I like having a partner, instead of another dependent.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh, I wish more men would make their wives partners like that!

GRACE MULHARE

Amen! But the old men in the government still don't want to let all women vote! They say we're too emotional. As if "rational" men didn't fumble us into the worst war ever.

MRS. PEARCE

They always do! And as far as I can see, the wars don't achieve anything but dead young men and lots of widows, like me.

ELIZA

You're a war widow? I didn't know that. I'm sorry I didn't ask.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh, it happened a long time ago, in the Boer War. My Frank went off determined to do his patriotic duty and got killed in his first battle.

GRACE MULHARE

War is so devastating, and so senseless! Greek women were right about it centuries ago.

MRS. PEARCE

Greek women?

GRACE MULHARE

Yes, at least the fictional ones were. Do you know the play, LYSISTRATA?

ELIZA

No. What's it about?

GRACE MULHARE

Well, in the play, the Greek men have been fighting in civil war after civil war, and all the women on both sides decide they are not going to put up with it anymore, so they go on a sex strike. They won't give their men any, nothing at all. And very soon all the men on both sides are so deprived,

so comically desperate, they give in and make peace.

The women chuckle for a moment at the way Grace has mimicked the men as she delivered the line above.

MRS. PEARCE

Say, was this play based on history?

GRACE MULHARE

No, I'm afraid it wasn't.

MRS. PEARCE

Well I don't see why it wouldn't work for real. In fact, I think it might be more effective than this League of Nations thing they're trying to get started.

ELIZA

You might be right, but what about Henry Higgins? He didn't have combat duty in the war, and if he's starved for sex, he doesn't show it!

MRS. PEARCE

Mr. Higgins starved for *(she suppresses a giggle by covering her mouth with her hand briefly)* Oh my! What a crazy idea! He's not starved for anything. He's just drifting.

GRACE MULHARE

And that can lead him into trouble! I know this from what happened to my husband.

ELIZA

But he was killed in that second Boer war, wasn't he?

GRACE MULHARE

Yes, the trouble started before the war. *(Slight pause here. Grace seems to be bracing herself before continuing.)* You see, when I married Paul Mulhare, everybody told me I was marrying a "golden boy," and I believed they were right. He was drop dead handsome and thoroughly nice at the same time, and I had already learned that those two qualities seldom came together. He seemed to be almost irritatingly good at whatever he tried, whether it was playing cricket or being a barrister. And for the first few years after the wedding, he still seemed to have the midas touch. I knew that privately he blamed himself because we couldn't get a baby started, but nobody else

knew how much that bothered him. In public, everything seemed to be going his way. He was winning the cases he was assigned to, and impressing everybody in the process. And then influential people persuaded him to run for a seat in parliament in a by-election. He liked the campaign process, and his backers in the Liberal party were confident he would be an asset in the House of Commons. Then came election night, and the shock: he lost, to a Tory candidate who seemed so pedestrian compared to Paul. The political people were sure he would do better the next time, but somehow that loss knocked the stuffing out of Paul. He said he was all right, but he started to lose cases he should have won; he seemed to be just going through the motions of his life. Even at home: he'd always been a ... a very ... enthusiastic lover; now I practically had to seduce him to get anything started. **He** was just drifting. Well then that war broke out, and I was surprised when he said he wanted to enlist. I was afraid for him, of course, but I thought that maybe a big change in his life like that would ... ignite him again. I was wrong. After I got the notice announcing that he had been killed in action, several of the men in his unit wrote me letters. They all said how much they liked him, but every one of them mentioned that he had always seemed sad somehow, and that he had stood up to lead a charge as if he didn't care what happened to him. They called that bravery, but I ... I feel in my heart to this day that Paul was just, just checking out of a life that ... that didn't engage him anymore. That's why now I can't stand to see good men just drifting.

ELIZA

Do you really mean it's **that** necessary to ... to get Henry Higgins ... engaged again?

GRACE MULHARE

If you mean, do I think Professor Higgins's drifting will lead to something drastic? The answer is no, probably not. But for me, it's a question of waste. When I see so much that needs to be done, just in our topsy turvy England, and so much that could be done now that was impossible a few years ago, the idea of a fine man with a first rate mind retiring into ... melancholy isolation, strikes me as a waste we can't afford. So, introduce me to Higgins; I'll be gentle; I'll just try to find the key to his imagination.

ELIZA

Yes, yes. we'll try to arrange a time very soon for the two of you to meet. We will be grateful for whatever you can do. But ... but I must tell you something I should have told you before: we, Mrs. Pearce and I, we're hoping, just hoping, mind you, that you and Higgins might ... become a couple. Can you forgive us for match-making, or trying to at least?

GRACE MULHARE

Oh I knew that from the beginning! And I don't mind. I won't flirt with Henry Higgins; I'll be working on his mind, like I said. But if I sense a spark of mutual attraction flickering, I may fan the flame a little. I don't like the prospect of marching on toward my dotage alone. I'd much prefer male company along that way: not some man who would bore me to tears, or someone who would aggravate me into them all the time, but someone in between who would be all right, most of the time.

MRS. PEARCE

Well the best of luck to you, Grace. After the conversation we've just had, I feel bold enough to call you by your first name. It's been a pleasure to meet you, and I hope we we're now friends. Thanks for a half hour I won't forget.

ELIZA

Amen to that!

The women embrace each other as friends.

THE END OF ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

The curtain opens on the same set, Higgins's study, some two weeks later. He is seated in an easy chair, leafing through a periodical. After a beat, Mrs. Pearce appears in the stage right entrance to say:

MRS. PEARCE

Don't forget, Mr. Higgins. Mrs. Mulhare will be here any minute now.

HENRY HIGGINS

I know, I know. I'm hoping I can keep this visit short, just long enough so Eliza will stop pushing

me to meet her. I'm not in the mood to listen to an ex-suffragette looking for a new project. After a half hour, if she's still here, come in and remind me that I have an appointment with ... with my physician.

MRS. PEARCE

All right, if you're sure that's what you want.

HIGGINS

It is. By the way, that note from the Colonel yesterday says he'll be coming back in two weeks!

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, I know. I got a letter from him too. Isn't it nice that his niece is doing so much better?

HIGGINS

Oh? ... yes, that's ...uh...very good news.

Mrs. Pearce exits, and Higgins sits alone for a beat or two, looking a bit puzzled, suggesting his surprise that the Colonel wrote to Mrs. Pearce, and that her note was apparently "newsier" than his. His wondering is very quickly ended when Mrs. Pearce appears in the doorway again to say, "Mrs. Grace Mulhare, Mr. Higgins," and then steps aside to let Grace sweep into the room. She is looking her very best: very stylishly dressed, very warmly confident, and carrying a vase of fresh flowers, which she smoothly places on the nearest table, and then turns to face Higgins and say, brightly:

GRACE MULHARE

GOOD afternoon, Professor Higgins! It's such a pleasure meet you at last. The flowers are just my way of showing my appreciation. *(She now steps forward toward Higgins, her hand already extended for a handshake. When they do shake hands, she makes the event animated and vigorous. Higgins responds in kind, even though he is obviously taken by surprise; Grace Mulhare is already not what he expected. Then, without thinking, he becomes the master of phonetics again:*

HIGGINS

Mother Welsh, Father Irish. Oh, Excuse me! Force of habit.

GRACE MULHARE

Don't apologize. I'm impressed. Just one correction: Mother Irish, Father Welsh.

HIGGINS

Well thank you for the correction, Mrs. Mulhare, and I'm very glad to meet you. Mrs. Eliza Hill has

been telling me about you, and I'm glad you're finally here. *(He gestures toward a pair of comfortable chairs facing each other and they move toward them and sit down Grace begins):*

GRACE MULHARE

I'm very interested in the transformation you produced in Eliza. I think some people are treating it as a clever stunt, but I believe it's far more significant than that. For one thing, it exposed the flimsiness of our class system, didn't it?

HIGGINS

Yes, yes it did. As soon as the flower girl had acquired the exterior signs of membership in the "upper class," the right clothes and the right kind of speech, everyone just assumed she belonged. Of course no one knew that she didn't have any money to rely on, but actually that's true of quite a few people we think of as upper class; as long as they look and sound right, we don't ask too many questions.

GRACE MULHARE

And am I right in saying that Eliza helped the experiment succeed because she had a good ear, and she was a quick study with natural intelligence?

HIGGINS

Oh yes, very much so! She was ... bewildered and even ... hostile at first, but once she caught on to what all the exercises were aimed at, and once she began to get some confidence, there was no stopping her. And now, as you know, nothing **can** stop her! *(They both chuckle.)*

GRACE MULHARE

So true. And Eliza says it's a shame that more bright, poor girls won't ever have the chance to put their natural abilities to good use.

HIGGINS

She's absolutely right. Intelligence and talent are distributed randomly, not by class. God knows there are dunces sitting on the government bench in the House of Commons, and I would bet good money that we'd be better off if those dunces changed places

with some of the people hired to tend the furnaces and mop the floors. *(Again, they share a chuckle.)*

GRACE MULHARE

But how can we change things? How can we generate more opportunities for more people?

HIGGINS

Oh that's the biggest, hardest question of all! But I do know one thing: changes can happen now. The war was a terrible thing, but it did turn the world upside down, and I think it's unsettling everything. People who were content to be servants are now trying to get into the business world. Young people are enrolling in technical schools, and then becoming the mechanics we depend on to take care of our automobiles. I grumble about some of these changes, but they're happening anyway, and they should.

GRACE MULHARE

And one of the most important new things is the opening of opportunities for women.

(She smiles good humoredly as she says:) Don't forget, I'm a loyal suffragette.

HIGGINS

Well, the opportunities should have happened years ago, but at least they are under way, yes. Women should be able to decide for themselves whether or not they want to board that Marriage – Husband – Children Train that carries most women off to obscurity. And that means more careers have to be open to women, not just nursing, journalism, or the stage.

GRACE MULHARE

However, that could run into another inequality. Marriage doesn't necessarily mean obscurity for men. But would the ego of the husband of a successful, well-known wife be able to tolerate being in the background of her life?

HIGGINS

Well, he could be lucky and successful himself, like Robert Browning with Elizabeth Barrett.

(He speaks lightheartedly and humorously.)

GRACE MULHARE

Hear, hear! (*She claps briefly*) But it seems to me that this issue is just one of many problems on the horizon if we're looking for a time of great progress now, right?

HIGGINS

Actually, I don't think so. There's just one basic obstacle standing in the way: people! People are always a problem: we all, or most of us anyway, don't like change, even change that's good for us. We're afraid of what we don't know, and inertia is too comfortable. Why, if an inventor walked into the House of Commons tomorrow, and announced that he had found a foolproof, scientifically tested way to make deliciously edible grass grow anywhere, and so his discovery could end hunger in the world right away, and he wanted the government to sponsor it financially, there would be a huge uproar, and within a week it would be voted down. All sorts of established businesses and agencies, with wheat growers and vegetable farmers leading the way, would not let it happen.

Higgins and Mulhare both chuckle at his hyperbole.

GRACE MULHARE

So we are agreed, professor satirical: unless there's a revolution going on, people usually need to be talked into doing what they should do for their own benefit. And sometimes that takes a lot of talking, over a long period of time. Do you know about The Fabian Society?

HIGGINS

Isn't that the group Beatrice and Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw are running?

GRACE MULHARE

That's right, and nowadays they aren't just talking. Some of them started the new Labour party.

HIGGINS

Hmmm. Just what we need: another political party! Oh well, they can't be any worse than the Tories and the Liberals.

GRACE MULHARE

This one may turn out to be more to your liking. It's the direct political arm of the Fabians, and so their platform will be socialism --- as the Fabians predict it will happen in England.

HIGGINS

In England?! Are they daft? A revolution in England? We don't have a villain everybody wants to get rid of because they are afraid of him. The King is just an amiable symbol, poor chap. And the politicians come and go, thank God. *(Higgins is still being humorously ironic.)*

GRACE MULHARE

No, they are working toward a gradual, non violent development of socialism here, after the public gets more and more used to socialist ideas. The Fabians want to spread those ideas in every way they can, over and over, until the public is no longer frightened of them.

HIGGINS

Well good luck to the Fabians; they may be on the right track. And Shaw will be a big help to them. Didn't Yeats compare him to a sewing machine, clacking on endlessly? Still, you have to say he is very readable, very entertaining, and, God knows, nobody is more persistent, no matter what they say about him. But Mrs. Mulhare, you are very well informed about these Fabians. Are you one of them?

GRACE MULHARE

Yes, although I'm not a leader or an insider. I do want them to succeed, however, and I'm trying in my own small way to put their ideas into practice. The Fabians argue for national health care, and I'm trying to give that policy a human face by working with a group that cares for veterans with continuing medical conditions. Eliza's Freddy works with them too.

HIGGINS

Oh yes, she did mention that you and Freddy were involved with the same veterans group. Their work ... well, their work is so necessary, but it must also be heartbreaking at times.

GRACE MULHARE

Yes, yes it is. To see these young men, and many of them are so young, struggling with maimed bodies and maimed minds, at a time when they should be brimming with health and strength, it's not just terribly sad, it's infuriating. But when we can help them, get them strong again, give them hope again, it's worth all the frustrating hours, when ... when we don't see any improvement.

Higgins looks away for a beat or two, evidently moved by what he's just heard. Then:

HIGGINS

What you're doing is ... admirable to say the least. I feel I should say thank you, for everyone.

Grace leans forward to pat Higgins on the arm briefly as she says:

GRACE MULHARE

I appreciate that, especially coming from you. But I get more than I give from the time I spend with them. Ever since my husband was killed, I've had this strong feeling that I don't want to be just an observer of what's happening around me, watching other people doing things. I have to be in the flow of my life, pushing things forward, even if it's only by a few inches.

HIGGINS

And do they make you happy, those few inches forward?

GRACE MULHARE

No, not that often, but they keep me engaged, hopeful. I can keep my eye on the goal.

HIGGINS

And what is that goal, or do you have a a collection of goals?

GRACE MULHARE

Ah, you're reading me very well. I do have a number of goals, but I hope they are all connected. For instance, I want to see the Fabian vision coming true, and I want to see the veteran I'm working with this week making progress, so when he's well, he might join the Fabians too.

HIGGINS

And could it be that I have a place in your collection of goals?

GRACE MULHARE

Oh good! You've found me out. I don't have to work up to telling you about them. First, I am hoping that you will investigate the Fabians and join them soon.

At this point, Mrs. Pearce appears in the doorway of the stage right entrance to say:

MRS. PEARCE

Professor Higgins, you wanted me to remind you of your appointment with your physician. (*Hearing*

this, Higgins at first looks startled, but then recovers to say:)

HIGGINS

Oh yes, Mrs. Pearce. Uh, would you call him and ask if I can be rescheduled?

Barely suppressing a smile, Mrs. Pearce nods and exits.

GRACE MULHARE

Oh, I'm taking up too much of your time! Perhaps we should ... adjourn for now and resume later. Tomorrow?

HIGGINS

No, no. I'm quite interested in what you're saying. Why do you want me to join the Fabians? What could I contribute to them? I just do phonetics.

GRACE MULHARE

That's right. You know phonetics. You know how men from Cornwall speak, what Welsh women like to say. You can decipher what they're saying in Glasgow. What if you went beyond identifying and cataloguing? What if you looked for a link between what people sound like and how they think? If you found one, the Fabians could use that discovery to shape their appeals to all the different people they want to convince. *(slight pause)* Besides, I think you would enjoy working with them.

HIGGINS

Enjoy? How so?

GRACE MULHARE

Because ... because they are idealists with long range goals and immediate plans, and they are working cheerfully every day.

HIGGINS

Hmmm. You're a good saleswoman, Grace ---may I call you by your Christian name? *She nods smilingly* It's a good thing for me you're not peddling gold watches. But I'm not sure I want to sign up ... you know, commit myself to daily schedules, and all that kind of thing.

GRACE MULHARE

But that's the great thing about working for the Fabians! You don't face the same routine every day. One day you might be doing research on economic trends. The next day you might be at Speakers Corner in Hyde Park, trying to convince a little crowd that socialism works for everyone. The next day you could be working with me with the disabled veterans. Every day is a different challenge.

Oh Henry, come with us! We'll have a good time!

Suddenly, Henry's facial expression, one of smiling interest, freezes, and is replaced by a suspicious stare.

HIGGINS

Indeed! Pardon me, Mrs. Mulhare, but I must ask you: were you sent here by the Fabians to recruit me? Do they want my name on their letter head? If so, they've wasted your time.

Now Grace first seems shocked, and then quietly but visibly angry.

GRACE MULHARE

No, Professor, the Fabians did not send me here. As she told you, Eliza invited me to meet you because she thought you might be interested in my work, and we might work well together. Until just now, I thought she was quite right. But if you're suspecting my motives for being here, perhaps we're both wasting our time.

Grace shifts in her chair, as if to get up, but Henry raises a placating hand, as he says:

HIGGINS

Oh no! Wait! Please. Forgive me. Ever since, well, after word spread about my part in Eliza's uh, transformation, I've had to deal with a few people who wanted to ... to use me or my name. But I ... I shouldn't have suspected you. And ... and perhaps I ... I might enjoy working with you ... and the Fabians. It's just that lately nothing much appeals to me.

GRACE MULHARE

Well, I think I can understand your ... caution. And I can't guarantee that the Fabians won't bore you, eventually. The same thing might happen to me. But in the meantime, we will have had some interesting days using our minds and our hands in work we can believe in. So ... so let's not let the pessimistic "What ifs" stand in our way. What do you think?

Higgins pauses to ruminate for only a beat, then smiles as he says:

HIGGINS

I can't quite believe I'm saying this, but I'm going to give the Fabians a try, and I hope you will be my guide.

They both stand and shake hands warmly, smilingly.

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

ACT 1, SCENE FIVE

The time is a day or two beyond two weeks from the time of the previous scene. The scene is still the study in Higgins's house. When the lights come up Mrs. Pearce and Col. Pickering are seated comfortably side by side in the same two chairs Pickering and Higgins occupied at the beginning of the first act.

COL. PICKERING

Yes, it is good to be back. As I said, matters in Surrey went surprisingly well, but it was still tense there now and then, and so I was tense too. And now I feel completely at ease, at home! Thanks to you. *(He gives her arm a friendly pat.)*

MRS. PEARCE

And I'm so glad we can have a good talk at last. I've missed that. So, Ellen has things straightened out to her liking?

COL. PICKERING

She does. And I believe she's determined to keep them that way. She's made it clear to her in-laws that she's not moving to be near them, and she's not going to be converted back to the Church of England, but she and her family will make friends with the local vicar. And the boys will visit my brother and his wife regularly. Also, both sets of grandparents have agreed on one standard of behavior for them. Nobody's perfectly happy with those arrangements, but they are accepting them. What a relief!

MRS. PEARCE

That's grand. And I'm sure they all have you to thank for things turning out so well.

COL. PICKERING

Well, I think I helped a bit, but Higgins was right. Ellen had to assert herself, and she did.

MRS. PEARCE

Speaking of Professor Higgins, I feel a little disloyal admitting this, but I like it when we can talk, just the two of us.

COL. PICKERING

I do too. Higgins does tend to dominate any room he's in, doesn't he? Is he out again with Mrs. Mulhare this afternoon?

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, they were going to a conference on eliminating poverty, he said.

COL. PICKERING

She certainly is taking up a lot of his time now, isn't she?

MRS. PEARCE

Indeed! For the past few weeks she's been arriving here in her car every other afternoon, it seems, to take him off to some event for the Fabian Society.

COL. PICKERING

She has her own car?

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, and drives it herself, too. She's quite the modern woman.

COL. PICKERING

Well, my first impression is that she's done Higgins a good turn by getting him out of the house and into some interesting activities. He seems happier and more energetic than he was before I left for Surrey.

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, that's true. And I'm beginning to think he's interested in her, not just in these seminars and charitable works.

COL. PICKERING

You mean Higgins is? Really? Oh I can hardly believe that! He's always been such a determined bachelor.

MRS. PEARCE

No one knows that better than I do. But I've noticed how he looks at her, and how he talks to her,

COL. PICKERING

So you seriously think he might marry Mrs. Mulhare?

MRS. PEARCE

I do, and I think it would be a good thing for him if he does.

(Pickering is silent and thoughtful for a beat or two.)

COL. PICKERING

Well, I agree with you on that. But if Higgins gets married... that means you and I need to have a talk.

MRS. PEARCE

Need to have a talk? What about?

COL. PICKERING

Well, if Higgins gets married, there will be a mistress in this house for the first time. And she will want to run things to suit herself. Now, you know this Mrs. Mulhare, and she may ask you to stay on as housekeeper, but will you want to stay on and adapt to her ways and her likes and dislikes? Higgins generally gives you a free hand about managing the house. I doubt that the new Mrs. Higgins will be so hands off, no matter how well you get on with her now. Isn't that right?

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, I suppose it is. I have been thinking about would happen around here if Grace did become Mrs. Higgins, and I've started to wonder if, for her sake and mine, I shouldn't retire after the wedding.

COL. PICKERING

Well I have to wonder about my status too. I have no doubt that Higgins, and the new Missus, would politely tell me that of course they would be happy to have me stay on here. But would any

newlywed couple really want an old bachelor hanging around the house, needing to be invited to take part in what they plan? (*Slight pause*) No, I'll say right now that it's time for me to stop being the permanent resident in the guest room, in any guest room. I want my own home, whether Higgins gets married or not. And I ... I invite you to make my home our home.

Mrs. Pearce's face registers surprise, then uncertainty. Finally, she says:

But MRS. PEARCE

Oh Col.! ... I mean ...Matt! You mean you're ... you're?

COL. PICKERING

Yes. I'm asking you to marry me, Flo.

MRS. PEARCE

I'm so surprised! I never expected. ... I thought I was too old. ... I ... oh, yes! Yes!

She begins to cry, tears of happiness well up in her eyes and run down her cheeks. Pickering moves forward, puts his arms around her, and pats her shoulder as he says:

COL. PICKERING

There, there, Flo. Have a good happy cry. But I have to warn you: I'm so thrilled that you said yes, I'm about to cry too!

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX

ACT I TIME: *a few days later.* **PLACE:** *The Study again, but now there is a table, center stage, with a few chairs placed around it. On the table, we see some of the devices Higgins has used in speech drills with Eliza and other clients, including the gas-fired candle apparatus used to measure the correctness of the "h" sound. There's also a vase of fresh, bright flowers. After a beat three people enter from stage right: first Higgins comes in, accompanied by Freddy Hill, then Grace Mulhare. Freddy says:*

FREDDY HILL

Let me say again, Professor, Grace, I'm so grateful that you're willing to work on this case. I don't really have high hopes for a break-through, but I want to keep trying.

HIGGINS

That's all right, Freddy; we're glad to help. I understand you had trouble getting him here today.

FREDDY HILL

Oh yes. He missed his last appointment with us, and he was late today. I was afraid he'd given up entirely.

GRACE MULHARE

Well, he's sitting out in the hall now, under Mrs. Pearce's watchful eye. I thought you'd want a moment to tell us a little more about him. His name is Brian Hoffman, I believe? And, he can't talk?

FREDDY HILL

Yes, he was literally struck dumb. He's only 19, poor chap, and he was a private in the army. His unit was retreating to safer ground when there was a gas attack from the rear. Everybody had to put their gas masks on right away, but Brian's best friend dropped his mask, and then kicked it away when he tried to pick it up, and he started to choke to death right there. He staggered up to Brian, coughing, grabbing at him frantically, but there wasn't anything Brian could do for him. He couldn't even break free to get the fellow's mask. Brian just had to watch him die horribly, inches from his face. That did it. The trauma paralyzed his throat somehow. He can't try to speak; he opens his mouth; you can see him trying to force sounds out, but nothing happens.

HIGGINS

God, what an awful thing! The doctors haven't helped? No sedatives work?

FREDDY HILL

They've tried everything they can think of, psychiatrists too. They say he is consciously eager to talk; he wants to get his normal life back, but the trauma hasn't let go.

HIGGINS

What ... What do you think I can do? I work with sounds, and if he can't make any ...?

FREDDY HILL

I know, I know. I just thought if you could get him to try some of the exercises you had Eliza do, something might click. Maybe I'm on the wrong track entirely?

HIGGINS

No, I ... I'm willing to give it a try. What do we have to lose? Or I should say, What does **he** have to

lose?

GRACE MULHARE

Good! Let's get him in here.

She hurries out the stage right entrance and Freddy and Higgins move to the table holding the devices, both of them seeming to be lost in thought. Higgins finally says:

HIGGINS

You know, maybe we should start him with the gas fired candle. He just has to breathe to make that work.

At this point, Grace enters again, leading Brian Hoffman. He is a casually dressed young man who is wide-eyed nervous, looking around, uncertain. Grace tries to make him feel at least a little more at ease:

GRACE MULHARE

Well, Brian, this is where we'll be working for a while, and this gentleman is Professor Henry Higgins.

(Conspiratorially) He looks pretty formal, doesn't he? But let me tell you: he has a wicked sense of humor, not always proper, either!

Higgins and Freddy instantly decide to go along with the tone Grace has set, and they chuckle, as Higgins shakes hands warmly with Brian. Higgins points toward the table, and they all move toward it, and Higgin, smiling all the while, steers Brian to the chair in front of the gas-fired candle, and he seats himself in the chair directly opposite Brian. Grace and Freddy stand behind Higgins. Then he says:

HIGGINS

Well, Brian, this will be an easy exercise. *(He turns on the candle flame)* I will say a phrase with lots of "H" sounds in it. Then you will try to repeat it, stressing the "H" sounds so firmly that the candle flame will temporarily go out, like this: *(He leans toward the candle flame, and says, "hope," and the flame flickers out.)* Now, don't worry if you can't say the words right away; just breathe strongly enough to put out the flame. Can you try that breathing once now? *(Brian breathes and the flame goes out.)* Good. That was fine. Now here we go with a phrase: "Hopeful Hamlet Hailed Horatio." All right, now you try it. *(Brian struggles earnestly to repeat the phrase, but has to settle for just breathing hard enough to douse the candle flame four times.)* All right. Good start.

All right. Let's try another phrase *(Slowly he says:)* "Hungry Hubert Heard Hymns at Harrow."
(The result for Brian is the same, and it remains the same when Higgins repeats that phrase again,)

GRACE MULHARE

You know, we're going to get Brian out of breath and bored at the same time. Let's have some fun with this. *(to Henry)* Do you know any silly, funny phrases we can use?

Higgins thinks a moment, then smiles, and says:

HIGGINS

All right, Brian. Let's try doing one word at a time, and clowning around with it. I'll say the word; then you try, but imitate my crazy way of doing it. *(Now Higgins becomes a ham actor, grimacing and gesturing as he "over acts" each word in this phrase:)* "A hideous, happy hippo hiccupped a hen! *(Brian does his best silent imitation of Higgins and also manages to momentarily douse the candle flame.)*

Grace and Freddy laugh happily, and Higgins joins in when he's finished the phrase. We can see that Brian enjoys this variation in the exercise.

HIGGINS

I've got another one: *(once again in an exaggerated, comical delivery)* "Healthy Harry Has Hairy Hands!" *(Brian quite enthusiastically does his silent but animated version after each word.)*

Higgins has to pause now, to think of another phrase, but Freddy comes to the rescue, whispering one in Higgins' ear. Higgins reacts in his ham actor mode:

HIGGINS

Why Freddy! How very naughty! And how funny! But don't worry; I won't tell Eliza. Grace, you'd better cover your ears. "A Happy Harlot Humped Hamlet!"

Grace does cover her ears, but laughs out loud anyway, as do Freddy, and Brian, who is mouth open, surprised. When he tries to repeat the words after Higgins, he has to pause for breath several times. Higgins has now thought of another phrase, and he signals that it's coming, with exaggerated hand gestures and facial expressions.

HIGGINS

"A Haggard Hag Hopped to Hell!"

*A smiling Brian breathes his way through the words as before, same gestures and faces, while Higgins smiles, but **When Brian gets to "Hell," he actually says it aloud**, without quite realizing what he's done. Higgins quickly asks him to repeat the phrase, and when he does so, he says "Hell" aloud again. Now he stops, his eyes wide and mouth open again, as he does realize what has happened.*

HIGGINS

(quietly, almost casually) Just once more, Brian.

BRIAN HOFFMAN

(slowly, a little haltingly) "A Haggard H-Hag ...Hopped to ... Hell." (He heaves a sigh of relief, and then His face breaks into a huge smile. Higgins, Grace, and Freddy clap their hands in celebration, and then):

GRACE MULHARE

Is there anything else you'd like to say, Brian?

(Brian tries to say something, but this time can't say it aloud. He looks anxious again, but Higgins quickly says:)

HIGGINS

Don't worry, Brian. You did talk, and that proves that you can. It will happen again, maybe when you least expect it.

GRACE MULHARE

That's right. Just relax and talking will come when it's ready.

FREDDY HILL

Yes. We made a real break-through today, Brian. Do you think that's enough for now? *(Brian nods Yes.)* Would you like to come back here for another session with Professor Higgins when he has time for us, or would you rather try something else at the clinic?

BRIAN HOFFMAN

Oh, h-here! *(His eyes open wide, and he smiles excitedly, while the others clap and chuckle delightedly.)*

HIGGINS

Brian, from now on, we'll have to be on our guard. At any moment you're apt to pop out with God knows what! *(More laughter all around)*

GRACE MULHARE

Henry, you were a riot with your phrases and your ham acting!

HIGGINS

But you were the one who came up with the idea of making the phrases funny!

FREDDY HILL

Grace, forgive me for the off color one. I thought the shock value might be worth it.

GRACE MULHARE

It was! And don't worry. I wasn't going to faint dead away over words I've heard many times before.

HIGGINS

Did you really hear literate profanity in the trenches, Freddy?

FREDDY HILL

Believe it or not, I did and quite often. Put an Oxford grad under machine gun fire for awhile, and he is apt to let fly with some really bawdy language --- borrowed from Shakespeare!

Well, Grace, Henry: I'm sure Brian is eager to let his family know about his progress, so we should get to my car, but he and I are more grateful than we can ever say for what you've done. Could I call you about scheduling another session?

HIGGINS

Of course. And I think Grace and I are almost as happy as you two are about today.

After hugs and hand shakes, Freddy and Brian exit. Higgins and Grace are standing near each other at this moment, and they both seem moved by what has just happened. After a beat, Higgins puts his hand on Grace's shoulder and says:

HIGGINS

Grace, I think what just happened here is the best thing I've ever been part of.

GRACE MULHARE

Henry, you were magnificent. You took a risk by playing the clown, but you didn't hold back at all.

HIGGINS

We did it together. Just like we have been for weeks now, and ... and I want to tell you: I feel more alive than I have been for a long time, more interested in things, and ... well, happier. I thank you for that.

GRACE MULHARE

I've enjoyed these weeks so much too, Henry. We make a good team.

Now Henry puts both hands on Grace's shoulders, looks directly into her eyes, and says:

HIGGINS

Yes, yes we really do.

There is silence again, and Henry moves closer to Grace until his face is very close to hers. He seems about to kiss her, but he doesn't do so just yet, as if he were still undecided. After an awkward, silent beat, Grace finally says:

GRACE MULHARE

Henry, if you don't kiss me right now, I'm going to bite your nose!

The spell is broken. Henry laughs very briefly, and then does kiss Grace very tenderly.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

As the curtain opens, we find Higgins and Grace where we left them, finishing a tender embrace and kiss. After a beat, they part. Grace smiles happily at Henry, and he smiles at her too, but only for a second. Then he looks down at his feet almost unsteadily, and indeed does sink into the nearest chair, holding his face in his hands. Grace is alarmed, moves quickly to his side, and puts one hand on his shoulder.

GRACE MULHARE

Henry, dear! What's the matter? Do you feel ill?

HIGGINS

No, Grace, I'm not ill. I've just had a shock, that's all.

GRACE MULHARE

A shock!? Our kiss was shocking? I thought it was very nice indeed, but isn't "shocking" rather overstating it a bit?

HIGGINS

Well, yes ... but actually, no. I mean it was only shocking to me, because ... because it ... it opened a door to me ... a door I thought had been permanently closed a long time ago.

GRACE MULHARE

What ...what do you mean, Henry? I don't understand.

HIGGINS

Well, it's just that.... Oh, Grace: I shouldn't burden you with my ancient history.

GRACE MULHARE

But it wouldn't be a burden, Henry. I care about you, and maybe I can help you deal with whatever is bothering you.

HIGGINS

Oh, it may be too odd and complicated for anyone to help me. I think I just have to cope with it myself. You see the problem I have now goes back many years, to when I was a very young man, just 21 years old. That was when I decided I had to find out for myself about ... about sex. Of course, I knew the basic facts, but what did they mean for me? I decided, very rationally, very sensibly, I thought, to investigate. I didn't feel any religious or moral scruples holding me back. So I went to a brothel. And that's when my problem began.

He pauses here, as if uncertain how to continue. Grace thinks she may know why.

GRACE MULHARE

And the experience was crude and disgusting and disturbing. Is that it?

HIGGINS

No! On the contrary. It was a very high class brothel. Everything was clean, beautiful, welcoming. The whole experience was not only exciting; it was fascinating! It made me think that human ... uh

GRACE MULHARE

(helpfully) Lust?

HIGGINS

Well, the whole realm of human physical desire was something I wanted to explore and revel in. So, I planned to become a "regular" at that brothel.

GRACE MULHARE

And ... and did you?

HIGGINS

No. I did go one more time, but that was the last.

GRACE MULHARE

Why? What happened?

HIGGINS

I remembered the warnings I'd always heard about sexual indulgence for men, especially men who were ... intellectually ambitious. We were told every man had a fixed supply of vital energy, the kind you need if you want to be a high achiever in the arts or sciences. And they added that sexual activity drains away that energy. I decided to take those warnings seriously. I began to discipline my senses, my desires severely. I told myself that if I wanted to do important things in the life of the mind, I could only respond to intellectual passions. Eventually, I just shut most emotions out of my life.

GRACE MULHARE

I never heard of that strange notion about sex before.

HIGGINS

Well of course men didn't talk about such things to women. But your husband may have heard the theory.

GRACE MULHARE

Paul? Oh, if he did know about it, I can assure you that for most of his life, he paid absolutely no attention to it! Henry, forgive me, but those ideas seem so male, and so wrong. For one thing, they separate sex from love, and yes, people can do that, but they don't have to, and when they put sex and love together, they don't get weaker; they blossom. And let me tell you: I'm glad we're creatures of flesh and blood and emotions. We weren't meant to live like marble statues.

HIGGINS

(For a beat, Henry just stares at Grace, but then he says:) I admire your conviction. But I don't think I'm like a statue. Marble is cool and dignified. I compare myself to a block of wood. And right from the start you've been a disturbing force to me. Oh, I told myself I was just curious about you, and I could enjoy your company without changing myself, but now I know I can't do that; right now I don't want to be wooden anymore. But after all these years, how can I go about changing my whole way of life? I just don't know. I don't even know if I can change.

GRACE MULHARE

Well, I don't know either. And I'm not altogether sure about my feelings for you. But ... nothing

needs to be decided now. We can continue to work together, to be together, just like we have been doing, and see what happens.

HIGGINS

Yes, yes. I agree. That does seem like the most sensible thing to do. Just keep going on. (*Slight Pause*) Oh, and uh, Grace: the kissing: I think ... I think that can continue too?

END OF SCENE ONE, ACT TWO

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

Several weeks later. (This scene can be played in front of the drawn curtains, and the program would tell us that the forestage should now be seen as a street in front of a Doctor Grefond's office.) We see Freddy Hill, hands in pockets, obviously waiting for someone or something. After a beat, we find he was expecting Eliza, who emerges looking thoughtful. Freddy says:

FREDDY HILL

So, what did he say?

ELIZA

(With a "resigned" tone) Just as we thought. I'm pregnant. Nearly two months along, he thinks.

FREDDY HILL

But is everything all right? I mean with you.

ELIZA

Oh yes, I'm very healthy, according to him, but he did say that in the last month before the birth, I would probably have to put up with the fluid retention I had the last time.

FREDDY HILL

Well, if it is like the last time, you'll be uncomfortable, but it won't last too long, dear.

ELIZA

Oh? I can tell you one thing right now: it will seem a lot longer to me than it will to you.

FREDDY HILL

Oops! That was a dumb husband remark, right?

ELIZA

Yes, but let it pass. *(Smilingly)* You're a man. Oh, Freddy! I want to be as enthusiastic about this baby as I was about little Freddy, but all I can think of right now is that just when all our plans for the business expansion start happening, I will be practically useless. If I won't be able to take care of our London shop, how will we manage? Our budget was going to be stretched even in the plan; now, it will be broken entirely, and we will be just broke.

FREDDY HILL

I'm trying to think of things we can cancel, or cut back on. The Lease on the land: we'll have to cancel that, even though I doubt we'll ever get such good terms again. But at least we don't have any signed contracts with the builders. We'll just do what we have to do, and we'll survive.

ELIZA

But we were hoping for so much more, for all of us, including the new baby we talked about for 1922! Well we demonstrated one thing for sure. The "most modern device available to assist family Planning" is NOT absolutely reliable!

FREDDY HILL

I blame myself! I just ... got too ... frisky too often.

ELIZA

Oh, now just a minute! I never "just closed my eyes and thought of England," not even once. I was just as enthusiastic for the ... frisking ... as you were.

They look at each other, and despite the circumstances, can't help but laugh.

FREDDY HILL

And I was sooo grateful for that!! *(another laugh from both of them)*

ELIZA

Well, getting back to less ... pleasant realities, will we really have to shut down all our expansion plans? Let's not just assume that we will. Maybe we can just rearrange them somehow. Every time I think of the new customers that Housing Act the Parliament passed last year will bring our way: all those renters in London who will be happy to move to the outskirts and be proud council home owners for the first time in their lives, I think we have got to get to them. They

will want our advice on planting their first gardens, or on arranging the entertaining they will soon be bold enough to start. We'd be foolish not to take hold of this opportunity.

FREDDY HILL

Now we're back to our old argument. Once again, I agree with you about the opportunity, but I don't think we should get too big for our britches before we have the money to hold them up! And we have to keep some money in reserve to handle unexpected developments, like little whoever on the way.

ELIZA

Yes, yes. So, do you want me to say it: you were right and I was wrong?

FREDDY HILL

(Gently, smilingly) No, dear. We need cash, not humility. *(Pause, then a "light bulb" moment)* That's right! That's all we need; a lot more cash to hire the help we'll need. And how could we get a lot of cash in a hurry?

ELIZA

Well, by getting a loan, but we already decided we didn't want to start off in debt.

FREDDY HILL

No, we don't. But the other path to more money now is something we also ruled out: getting a partner. Remember, we said we wanted to remain a family owned business. Shouldn't we reconsider that now?

ELIZA

I'm ... I'm open to that now, I guess, but where do we find a suitable partner? We agreed we're not going to ask Col. Pickering to bail us out again.

FREDDY HILL

The easiest answer is your father.

ELIZA

No! I'd rather make the devil himself our partner! I'm on better terms with him now, but I'm sure we ought not to become dependent on him in any way.

FREDDY HILL

I thought you'd say that, and I think you're right. But what if I asked one of the officers I served with in the war to come in with us? I can think of at least two right now who might be suitable and interested.

ELIZA

Go ahead and sound them out. It won't do any harm to ask, and we might get lucky.

FREDDY HILL

Right! Well, the future looks a little less cloudy for us than it did about five minutes ago.

ELIZA

Yes. Now, if things work out the right way, I can look forward to my morning sickness with an untroubled mind.

END OF SCENE TWO, ACT TWO

ACT TWO, SCENE THREE

This scene is played in front of the curtains. When the lights come up, Higgins is sitting on a park bench, situated near the stage left entrance, and which is angled so that it faces the stage right entrance. The time is about a week later, in mid-afternoon. From offstage, we hear the vigorous voice of Alfred Doolittle in "campaign mode."

DOOLITTLE

So you blokes, and you "mature ladies," you really do need to vote the next time they call an election. And it's important that you vote for candidates who have your best interests in mind. And that means you have to think about what the candidates say, and think even more about what they really do! Now if you do that, I think you'll say to yourself, "These Liberals, they talk like they love me, like they can't do enough for me, but what do they do when they are in office? They trot out all kinds of do gooder schemes that don't do much for me, and reach into my pockets to grab my money for taxes. Well, what about the newcomers, the Labour candidates? I don't have to think very long about them, you'll say; they're just loony, they are. They say, in the future the government should run everything! As if the government didn't have enough trouble, and make a god awful mess, trying to manage what they are supposed to do now!"

At this point Doolittle is interrupted by applause and cheers. Meanwhile, Grace Mulhare enters from stage right and slides onto the bench next to Higgins. They then kiss briefly, and Higgins puts his arm around Grace's shoulder as they listen to the rest of Doolittle's speech:

DOOLITTLE

"Well, that leaves the Tories," you'll say to yourself. "Hmmm. Now they say the Tories don't care about people, They just want business to do well, all businesses." And then, if you're not too tired of all this thinking, you'll say: "All businesses doing well." Is that a bad thing? No, it's a good thing! Like, if my boss's supplier is doing well, he'll give my boss enough to sell and make more money, and Then when I ask my boss for a raise, he might grumble some, but he's more likely to give it to me, finally. That's how capitalism is supposed to work my friends. And it does, mostly. Just think of it this way: "A rising tide lifts all boats, from the Queen Mary to the little skiffs, and all the people in the boats." Well, the Tories will give us a rising tide of business, and that will lift us all up. So remember the rising tide, and vote Tory!

We now hear applause offstage, along with a few shouts of "Run, Alfie run!" and "We'll vote for you, Alfie!" We see Higgins shaking his head negatively, and Grace looking rather disgusted as well. He says:

HIGGINS

I feel like Dr. Frankenstein! I taught some rhetoric to a jolly old rogue, and he's turned into a Tory Creature, spouting slick, deceptive propaganda.

GRACE MULHARE

A rising tide lifts all boats, indeed! Too many people aren't on any boat, and the rising tide just drowns them!

Now, a smiling, cheerfully waving Alfred Doolittle backs into view from the stage right entrance. He then turns around, sees Higgins and Grace, and approaches them eagerly. He says:

DOOLITTLE

Well, Professor! Thanks for coming to hear my first real political speech. How do you think I did?

HIGGINS

First, Alfred, let me introduce you to my friend, Mrs. Grace Mulhare.

Doolittle now approaches them both with his right hand extended, and says:

DOOLITTLE

How do you do, Missus! Where has the Professor been hiding you!? And why?

GRACE MULHARE

Oh, I've been here and there; you're apt to see me anywhere. How do you do, Mr. Doolittle.

Doolittle shakes hands with Grace and Henry, and then turns his attention to Higgins.

DOOLITTLE

So, Professor: what do you think of your student? Did you notice? I used the classical structure you taught me: I started with a quick general introduction, then went right into my thesis, my main point about the Tories being the best choice for ordinary blokes. And then I laid out my case for that idea, and followed up by taking apart the arguments of the opposition. I finished up with what you called the pero ... peroration, the part about the rising tide. That really grabbed them, I think, just like you said it should.

HIGGINS

The structure was fine, Alfie. You were paying attention in our sessions. I must say, though: I didn't agree with your message. I don't think Tory policies will be at all good for the group you used to belong to: you know, the undeserving poor? And the deserving poor wouldn't fare much better.

DOOLITTLE

You think so? Well, I guess we don't think alike, do we? But what the hell, Henry? It's all just politics. Listen, I need to talk to some people over there *(He gestures back toward the offstage gathering)*. Thanks again for teaching me good. Oh, nice to meet you, Missus.

Doolittle rushes off through the stage right exit.

GRACE MULHARE

Well, he doesn't forget his manners, such as they are. Oh, Henry: you really should take him on; he will seem dangerously plausible to too many susceptible people.

HIGGINS

No, Grace, I've decided not to do it. I couldn't be a political candidate. It's not in me. The first time somebody in the crowd yelled out to me, "That's poppycock!" I'd say, You're an idiot! Go home!

I'd send voters running to the Tories.

GRACE MULHARE

No you wouldn't, Henry. You can be very convincing when you want to be, and entertaining too. Besides, you promised me you would consider it seriously.

HIGGINS

I did consider it seriously, and I told you I decided against it.

GRACE MULHARE

But I think you're just being negative because stepping up to a challenge that you've never considered before makes you nervous. You're underestimating yourself, dear.

HIGGINS

No, I know myself, and I know what's right and what's wrong for me. I wish you would just drop the subject.

Grace looks startled for a beat, as Higgins looks away. Finally:

GRACE MULHARE

I ... I won't mention it again.

Grace retreats into silence, and she looks straight ahead. The silence becomes awkward, and at last Higgins says:

HIGGINS

It's just that I don't like to be pushed into things. I have to make my own decisions. You have to remember that.

GRACE MULHARE

So ... you think ... *(she pauses to look at Higgins with a troubled expression, then:)* Excuse me, Henry.

Grace gets up from the bench, and turns to walk toward the stage right entrance. It's now Higgins' turn to look taken aback. He says:

HIGGINS

Oh, Grace! I didn't mean ... I ... I ... I'll see you tomorrow?

She pauses in the entrance to look back and say:

GRACE MULHARE

I don't know. *(She disappears into the offstage area. Higgins sits alone looking bereft and puzzled.)*

End of Scene Four, Act Two

ACT TWO, SCENE FIVE

The lights come up on Higgins's study again, mid morning, the next day. Eliza and Mrs. Pearce are seated side by side on the comfortable chairs. Mrs. Pearce seems to be in an emotional state; she dabs at her eyes as she says:

MRS. PEARCE

Oh Eliza, what have I done? What have I done? I was so surprised. I've been feeling down, wondering what was to become of me if I had to retire, and then, out of the blue, the nicest man in the world said he wants to marry me! I could hardly believe it, but I was thrilled. It seemed like a gift from heaven, the answer to all my worries about the future. I said yes in a daze, a daze! And now, he's out looking for a place where we could live, and I don't believe I can go through with it. He could be back here at any minute. What am I going to say? I'm so afraid!

ELIZA

You're afraid? What are you afraid of? Not the Colonel, surely!

MRS. PEARCE

Oh no, not him. But yes, in a way it is him. I haven't been to bed with a man in over forty years. I don't know if I could now. I don't even know if I want to now. What would it be like? I'll tell you right now: the thought of it terrifies me.

ELIZA

Flo, I understand why you're nervous about that, but maybe you shouldn't build it into a huge problem in your mind. Remember, he's older too, and I'm pretty sure he hasn't been to bed with a woman in a long time. I don't think he'll want to rush you into anything before you're both ready. And you can talk to him about how you feel, and what would be comfortable for both of you.

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, yes. I know you're right. I've given myself the same advice. I've even told myself I should talk to Matt about my fears now. I know he would be kind. But I can't help it; I just dread having that kind of conversation. Almost as much as I dread having him see me without my clothes on!

ELIZA

Well, I don't know what to say about that, Flo. I can't think of anything wise or soothing.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh, and what if I bore him? I'm very afraid I will. We've had some grand talks, the two of us, but they didn't happen every day, and even when they did, Higgins and his latest doings was the favorite topic. What will we talk about when there's just us? He's used to learned men and, and to Higgins, who can go off like a firecracker! How long will it be, how long will it be, before he looks at me and sees just a dull old woman? He won't say it, but he'll be thinking it.

ELIZA

Flo, you're exaggerating now. Don't create imaginary troubles. We all get enough real ones.

MRS. PEARCE

And then there would be the problem of keeping up with him.

ELIZA

What do you mean?

MRS. PEARCE

Well, he's talking about us travelling. He wants to take me to India to meet some of the friends he made there. India! Can you picture me in India? Me, who hasn't been any farther away from Wimpole Street than Brighton since I don't know when. And how could I get on with his friends in India? They are all language scholars. Are they going to be interested in my secrets of good housekeeping? Oh Eliza, What should I do? What should I do?

ELIZA

Flo, I ... I still don't know what to say! And I don't dare tell you what to do. (Pause) One practical question does come to mind: suppose you do have to retire soon as housekeeper here. If you don't get married, what will you do? Where will you go?

MRS. PEARCE

Oh. Well, I suppose I could always go to Brighton and stay with Pat, my younger sister. She's a widow, and she has a little place there.

ELIZA

All right. That means there's nothing pressing you to marry anyone. I've known a few women who felt they had to marry because they didn't have any other reasonable alternative. But you have a choice. So, if you really don't want to marry Col. Pickering, you shouldn't do it. No woman should let herself be talked into a marriage she's not comfortable with. You can tell him you're honored by his proposal, and you like him very much as a friend, but after thinking it over, you've decided not to marry him. He's a good, decent man; he'll accept your decision without giving you any trouble.

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, I know he would. *(She is thoughtfully silent for a beat or two, but then, as tears come into her eyes, she declares:)* But I just don't know if I could ever tell him that.

ELIZA

Well, well why couldn't you?

MRS. PEARCE

Because ... I love him! I love him. I'm just so afraid of getting married!

Eliza throws up her hands in frustration and puzzlement.

ELIZA

Then I ... I have nothing else to offer, Flo. I don't know what you can do.

Now, Col. Pickering himself enters from stage right. As soon as she sees him, Mrs. Pearce turns away so he won't see her tears. Eliza also looks surprised and uncomfortable. The Col., however, seems about to deliver cheerful news.

COL. PICKERING

Hello Eliza! It's a nice surprise to see you here. I assume Florence has told you our wonderful news.

Hello, Flo Why, what's the matter, dear? You look as if you've been crying?

ELIZA

(Quickly) Well you know how we women are, Col. We get very emotional when we're happy.

COL. PICKERING

Ah yes! Happy tears. I've shed a few of those myself in the last day or two. But I have news that might get smiles instead of tears from you, Flo. I think I've found us a house not more than a few streets from here that will suit us perfectly. Now, I didn't make any commitment; I want you to see it, and find out if you like it as much as I do. But it does have some nice features: it's furnished of course, quite tastefully (but that's just my male opinion; you'll have to decide) and there's a parlor with a love seat in front of a fireplace. I can picture us sitting there together very cozily watching the fire on chilly evenings, eh? And the owner says the servants --- there's a small staff: a cook, a maid or two, and a housekeeper --- they are willing to stay on at the pleasure of new owners. You know what I thought when the man told me that? I thought of all the years you've been "in service," taking care of other people, including me and Higgins. If we take that house, you will be the mistress, telling the servants, and me too, how you want things done. It did my heart good to imagine that, Flo dear.

By now, Mrs. Pearce is listening smilingly, with no signs of anxiety. She says:

MRS. PEARCE

It ...well, it sounds just grand to me, Matt. Of course, I do want to see for myself.

COL. PICKERING

Absolutely. ... Say, what about right now? It won't take us ten minutes to walk there.

MRS. PEARCE

Oh, all right. Let's do it. Eliza, would you like to come along too?

ELIZA

Thank you, but no. I think I would just be the proverbial fifth wheel.

Now Mrs. Pearce stands up, takes Pickering's arm, and after they both say goodbye to Eliza, they exit stage right, leaving Eliza still seated in the chair, looking a little dazed but happy. After a beat or two, Mrs. Pearce re-enters, draping a shawl around her shoulders. She says, to a surprised Eliza:

MRS. PEARCE

I told Matt to wait for me by the front gate while I got my shawl. I just couldn't leave you here wondering what happened: when he started talking to me about the house, I just **knew**, suddenly I knew: I can't give him up or put him off. That's impossible.

ELIZA

But what about all your fears?

MRS. PEARCE

Oh I still have them. I'll just have to cope the best way I can, God help me.

She turns to go, but then turns back to add:

MRS. PEARCE

Anyway, I'll bet India will be nicer than Brighton in the winter. Bye! *(She exits.)*

END OF SCENE FIVE, ACT TWO

ACT TWO, SCENE SIX *(Later, same day)*

The lights come up on closed stage curtains. There are narrow flats positioned on both sides of the stage in front of the curtains. A 1920 style box telephone is affixed to each piece, and we see a chair and a small table below each telephone. Henry, who is standing in front of the telephone stage left, is making a call. After a beat, we hear the phone stage right ring, and Grace steps from the stage right wings to answer it. In the dialogue that follows, both Grace and Henry usually remain standing in front of their respective phones, sometimes looking at the phones, and sometimes looking out toward the audience. During the conversation their voices gradually get louder and more heated.

GRACE MULHARE

Hello.

HIGGINS

Grace, it's me. I thought we were going to that economic policy meeting today.

GRACE MULHARE

Oh? I didn't think the arrangements were that definite. Henry, perhaps we need to take a break from each other anyway. We've been together quite a lot lately.

HIGGINS

Take a break? Grace are you ... are you upset with me because I ... I spoke a little crossly to you yesterday? I'm sorry; I didn't mean to sound that way. I just ... just wanted to let you know how I am about some things.

GRACE MULHARE

Did you think I needed an extra lesson? I had already told you I wouldn't mention you running for Parliament again.

HIGGINS

Well, I thought I ... I should make sure we wouldn't have any trouble about such things in the future.

GRACE MULHARE

So you foresee some kind of future for us, and you wanted to lay down some rules for me.

HIGGINS

Rules? No, no, not rules, just a "Heads up" notice, that's all.

GRACE MULHARE

Really. Well, should I give you a "heads up" notice? About what you need to avoid?

HIGGINS

What I should avoid? Oh, I don't know what that would be. Well, my mother was always after me to stop swearing. (*He chuckles.*) You could pick up where she left off. Even though I'm not swearing much anymore.

GRACE MULHARE

No, I'm not going to do that. I don't really care much about your swearing. And I don't intend to step into your mother's role.

HIGGINS

Well Grace, what do you want? What do you want me to say? You know, I thought you were different from most women. You seemed to be comfortable to deal with. I felt I didn't have to tiptoe around your temperament, and think three times before I said anything to you. I I think this conversation isn't like you at all.

GRACE MULHARE

I can make the same point about you. I thought we were working so well together, and you were affectionate and opening up to me. I thought we were growing closer every day. Now, I realize that I was always the one putting myself forward, suggesting things we could do together, adjusting my likes and dislikes to fit in with yours. You never made any suggestions for us; you just went along with mine. You never tried to find out what I would really like.

HIGGINS

How can you say that? I thought I was accommodating you!

GRACE MULHARE

Maybe we've both been trying too hard. Or... maybe we won't be as compatible as we thought.

HIGGINS

Well I'm sure of one thing: I hate arguing on the telephone. I'm staring at this box, or off into space when I want to look at you. Can't we get together and say what we have to say? Would ...would you be willing to come to see me, say this Friday?

GRACE MULHARE

All right. I do want to argue with you in person too. I'll be there at 2:30?

HIGGINS

That's fine with me. Well, uh ... Goodbye, Grace.

GRACE MULHARE

Goodbye, Henry.

END OF SCENE 6

ACT 2, SCENE 7

Time: a few days later.. Place: A small bedroom on the third floor of Henry Higgins' home; we see only a slice of the room, stage right: a door in a flat, next to the door, a single bed facing out, toward the audience, a small table next to the bed, up against the wall. Higgins, looking anxious, is sitting on the edge of the bed, facing the audience. After a beat, there's a knock on the door. Henry says, "Come in," and the door opens to allow Eliza to enter. She says:

ELIZA

Henry, what's going on? Why did you want to meet me in my old room here? *(She walks in, looks around, and stands facing Higgins.)*

HIGGINS

Oh, I wanted to talk to you privately, and there's "summer cleaning" going on downstairs, maids coming in and out all the time in all the rooms, and Grace is due here in a few minutes. Eliza, you've got to help me. You got me into this situation; please help me figure out what to do now.

ELIZA

I got you into What situation?

HIGGINS

With Grace! You introduced us. And now I think she may not want to have anything to do with me anymore.

ELIZA

Well what happened? I thought you two were getting along just fine.

HIGGINS

We were, we were. But I sometimes felt she was trying to push me into things, but then the kissing started, and now I'm not sure what's going to happen.

ELIZA

The kissing started?

HIGGINS

Yes. We started kissing each other when we met, and when she left.

ELIZA

That's a problem??

HIGGINS

Yes! ... I don't want it to stop!

ELIZA

Well, why would it stop? What did you do? Did you have a silly quarrel?

HIGGINS

She ... she kept after me to stand for election against her father! Can you imagine that? I definitely don't want to do that, and I just got my back up about it. I didn't want her to get the idea that she could manage me, and I told her to remember that. She didn't take it well. In fact, she left in a huff.

ELIZA

Well, that doesn't sound like her to me, but it does sound like you! How did you tell her that? Did you shout or something?

HIGGINS

No, I just said, "*I don't like to be pushed into things. You have to remember that.*"

ELIZA

It must have been the way you said it. But she's a reasonable person. She's coming here now, you said. Why don't you just apologize and say you didn't mean to offend her?

HIGGINS

But, but ... I don't know how I should apologize. I don't want her to keep pushing me, but I want us to keep getting together and doing things. In fact, I ... I've been thinking of ... of asking her to ... marry me.

Eliza's face registers satisfaction and caution, and she pauses a moment for thought.

HIGGINS

Eliza, what is your advice? Please. She will be here in a few minutes, and I can't keep her waiting.

ELIZA

You want advice on marriage from me?

HIGGINS

Yes, yes. That's ironic on many levels, I know.

But ... but you are the only person I really know who has made a reasonably successful marriage.

ELIZA

Well thanks for the compliment, but all I will claim is that Freddie and I are working at it, marriage that is, and I know he is no longer infatuated with me, but I'm sure he loves me, and that's

better for both of us. Now, before we get to advice, I have a question: do you love Grace?

HIGGINS

Yes, yes, of course. ... well, I certainly believe I do.

ELIZA

What makes you think you love her?

HIGGINS

I ... I don't just enjoy her company. I realize now I feel a real need to be with her, and I want to make her happy.

ELIZA

Well, that's a good start, but if you do want her to be happy, you shouldn't **decide** what will do it for her; the two of you should talk and then agree on that. And remember, a happy marriage won't eliminate all disagreements and problems.

HIGGINS

Yes, I know that. ... Marriage is a big risk for me. But ... well I realize now that I have to keep opening myself up, if I really want to be happy. But about making Grace happy: I disagree with you there. I think she will want me to "take charge," to some degree. After all, she's been a widow for what, 19 years? She's going to want her man to take care of her now, after all those years of coping on her own, don't you agree?

ELIZA

Oh no, Henry. I don't. Remember, Grace was a suffragette, and I don't think she's tired of making decisions for herself, not at all.

HIGGINS

Really? ... Well, I think I'll go with my instincts anyway. She even said she wanted me to speak up more about what we do together.

ELIZA

Well, if you tell her that you will take charge of her, don't be surprised if she throws something at you.

HIGGINS

I guess I'll just have to take that chance. I hope I can duck fast enough.

ELIZA

Then I hope you can just keep an open mind about whatever she says after that. And Henry, you have just heard my swan song as a counselor.

HIGGINS

Why, what do you mean?

ELIZA

I mean I need to retire from advice giving. I don't think I've been all that good at it anyway. Besides, I should pay more attention to my own life now.

HIGGINS

Oh don't sell yourself short. I, for one, have no complaints. Well, I have to go now. Grace may be in the study when I get there, and I certainly don't want to keep her waiting!

ELIZA

Good luck!

Henry rises, starts for the door, opens it, and starts to rush through, but then stops, turns around and takes a step back into the doorway.

ELIZA

What? You have to go!

HIGGINS

Thank you! *(He exits, and the lights go down.)*

END OF SCENE 7, ACT 2

ACT 2, SCENE 8

Time: Two minutes later, the study as we've seen it before. Grace is sitting in one of the easy chairs. A small vase of her signature flowers rests on the large table. After a beat the stage right door opens and Henry rushes in. He says:

HIGGINS

Oh Grace, I'm glad you're here, but I hope I haven't kept you waiting.

GRACE MULHARE

No, Henry. I just sat down here less than two minutes ago I think.

HIGGINS

Well, that's good. *(He paces across the room for a beat, before saying:)* Grace, I want to start by apologizing again for my behavior the other day. I don't know what got into me. I spoke to you as if I were a crabby old man and you were a new maid.

GRACE MULHARE

(She chuckles at his last line, and then) That's a good way to describe the moment, but don't worry about it anymore. And I shouldn't have pushed you about running against Mr. Doolittle. I was thinking too much about how much I dislike his politics, and not enough about what your feelings were.

HIGGINS

Good. I'm glad we can put the whole incident behind us ... because after our conversation on the telephone, I've been thinking hard about the two of us, and now I have something serious to say to you, something I hope you will respond to favorably.

GRACE MULHARE

Well, Henry, whatever it is, it already sounds formidable.

HIGGINS

Uh ... yes. Grace, for about a month now, we've been meeting together and working together, and I think it's fair to say there is a bond of respect and affection between us now, despite our recent ... disagreement. So, I would like to ... deepen the bond significantly, if that meets with your approval.

GRACE MULHARE

(She can't help but be amused by his solemnity.) Just how do you seek to "deepen the bond, significantly," Henry?

HIGGINS

Oh, hell, Grace, I want us to get married!

GRACE MULHARE

(She laughs) Henry, I think I prefer your “Oh, hell, Grace” manner.

HIGGINS

That just slipped out. I was afraid it would. But ... but before you say anything, I want to explain my whole concept of the proposal.

GRACE MULHARE

Didn't “I want us to get married” clarify your intention quite nicely?

HIGGINS

But I want you to know how I intend to treat you, once we're married. I'm sure we'll continue to work together with the Fabians, yes, but when we're living together in this house, I don't want you to have any worries, any anxiety. You've been a woman alone for a long time, and I know you've had to fend for yourself and deal with everything from bills that had to be paid, to balky servants, to leaky roofs, to rude neighbors, and on and on. Well, all that will end once we're married. I will take care of everything that might be bothersome to you. You have earned the right to be cherished and protected and happy, and I will devote myself to your happiness.

As she listens to the above, Grace at first listens intently, looking straight at Henry. Toward the end of it, however, she turns away, and seems to be thinking hard. When he finishes, she remains silent for a beat, and then turns back toward Henry to say:

GRACE MULHARE

Henry, I thank you for that proposal. I know you meant every word, and that you love me. But I can't accept. If I did, I would feel like your mistress, not your wife.

HIGGINS

No, no. You wouldn't be the mistress, getting luxuries in return for ... servicing me, you would be the angel in the house, your house.

GRACE MULHARE

But I would still feel like your mistress. Henry, let me make a counter proposal. I want to marry you so I can be your wife, your helpmeet, your partner in life. I want to participate, to do my share, in everything we have to confront, in everything we have to plan as a couple. Now, I realize that neither

of us can really change who we are. I will always be the instigator, the one who wants to charge into things, and You will always be the wise curmudgeon, who is realistically skeptical.

HIGGINS

Amen to that!

GRACE MULHARE

So we should make allowances for each other's temperament ... and oddities, and compromise often and willingly, no pouting. But when we have a serious disagreement about something important, we need to argue rationally, with a minimum of shouting ...

HIGGINS

A minimum of shouting?! Are you kidding?

GRACE MULHARE

With a minimum of shouting, until one of us convinces the other, or we find a compromise. Oh, and neither of us should ever use emotional blackmail to win an argument. *(Higgins now looks thoughtful and concerned for a beat before he says:)*

HIGGINS

Well now I don't know if I can accept your proposal. The way you describe it, we would be equal partners in the business of running our life. Except for when we were sleeping together, would our relationship be all that different from my relationship with Pickering? What about emotion? I used to think I was that block of wood, remember, but now if we marry, I would like to be a husband who feels like a man, who knows that his wife looks up to him and relies on him, and wants him to ... to take care of her.

GRACE MULHARE

Oh Henry, don't misunderstand me. Of course I will sometimes want you cuddle me and pamper me and cheer me up when I feel down. And I will be delighted if you sweep me off to a wonderful holiday now and then. And I'll be thrilled when you are ... an ardent lover. But I want to treat you the same way. When you're tired or tense, I want to massage your neck. If you're feeling down, I want to distract you by being silly and making you laugh. When you're anxious, I want to soothe

you and reassure you. Yes, I want to act like a woman, too. I want to feel grateful when I wake up every morning and see your head on the pillow next to me. And don't be surprised if I sometimes set out to seduce you. But always, always, I want us to be two adults who love each other. I don't want either of us to feel we have to fit into some standard role husbands or wives are expected to act out.

HIGGINS

That all sounds wonderful, Grace, but it's almost certainly unattainable, except for a very few lucky, exceptional couples. The reality is that the traditional understanding of how marriages function is baked into our minds and even our expectations. Think of all the marriages we've encountered in our lives among friends and acquaintances, not to mention the indelible examples of our own parents. We might start out determined to be different, to fulfill your ideal, but the odds are that within a year or two, we would be like most married couples: sitting mostly silent across the dinner table from each other every night. So, now I have a challenge for you: if you love me, really love me, you should be willing to marry me, even though both of us know that sooner or later, we are likely to end up in a typical marriage. After all, I have observed that some couples, as the years go on, arrive at last at a quite comfortable, pleasant relationship, no matter how bored or irritated they were in years past.

GRACE MULHARE

That's a reasonable challenge, Henry. You know, I have to admit: when I listened to your concept of marriage, I actually thought for a moment: yes, I could live with this notion. I could carry it off. And I'll bet I could use some harmless feminine wiles to make it work the way I want. I certainly know that's been done before. But then I decided: no, I wanted to be honest with you, right from the beginning. I wanted to treat you like an adult, an equal partner, just the way I want to be treated. And you're right: it's going to be hard to maintain that kind of commitment day after day. *(She Pauses, looks thoughtful for a beat or two, then smiles invitingly at Higgins and says:)* You know, you said that only a few couples will beat the odd and have a marriage of equals that works. So here is my amended challenge to you. Henry, do you have the love, and the courage, to join me in marriage,

and commit to keep working, no matter what, to beat those odds, to be one of those lucky couples?

HIGGINS (after a stone faced pause)

That is a bold, foolhardy, unreasonable challenge! I accept.

They embrace tenderly, for a beat or two, and then Higgins draws apart and stands facing the audience but looking over their heads off into the distance with a serious look on his face. After a beat, Grace says:

GRACE MULHARE

What's the matter , Henry? Did you have another "shock"?

HIGGINS

No, but now I have this mental image of myself standing on a hill, and below me, I see a river with the water rushing by. And I know I'm absolutely determined to jump into that river.

GRACE MULHARE

Henry, take my hand. We'll jump together, and hope both of us can swim!

End of SCENE 8, ACT 2

ACT 2, SCENE 9

TIME: ten days later. This scene is played in front of the curtain, and the space is meant to be a London street. A sign outside the stage right entrance says "Registry Office." When the lights come up, Henry and Grace, and Col. Pickering and Mrs. Pearce, dressed in attractive, semi- formal clothes, emerge from the "the Registry Office." They look happy and relaxed, and not in a hurry.

HIGGINS

Well, we certainly made a hit with the registrar.

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, he acted like we brightened his whole day.

COL. PICKERING

I was surprised by the way he talked about the young couples he marries.

GRACE MULHARE

Indeed! (*obviously quoting the registrar*) "either unprepared or slobbering over each other."

MRS. PEARCE

And he approved of our "practicality" in getting married together, so no more witnesses were needed.

HIGGINS

(*Looking across to the stage right entrance*) Well look who's coming our way!

Eliza, Freddy, and Brian Hoffman enter from the stage left entrance. They cross the stage and greet the newlyweds heartily. We hear Brian Hoffman being introduced to Pickering and Mrs. Pearce, and Freddy explaining that Brian wanted to come along to congratulate Henry and Grace. They have barely finished these pleasantries when they are joined by another well wisher entering from stage left, Alfred Doolittle. He introduces himself to Brian, congratulates the newlyweds, and greets Eliza and Freddy affectionately. Then he says expansively:

DOOLITTLE

It's wonderful, isn't it? new couples, new households to be set up. Exciting. The Wimpole Street Residence won't seem the same though.

COL. PICKERING

Well, that's true, but Florence and I are moving into a house only two streets away.

HIGGINS

I expect there will be quite a bit of two way traffic between the two houses.

GRACE MULHARE

And the four of us, the newlyweds, we'll want to keep in contact with Freddy and Eliza.

FREDDY HILL

And we'll be happy to welcome you all. But we won't just "drop in" on the newlyweds.

ELIZA

And speaking of welcoming: in about 6 months, Freddy and I will be welcoming a new baby.

There follows another round of congratulations expressed by all to Freddy and Eliza. Finally, Alfred Doolittle declares:

DOOLITTLE

And maybe before the new baby comes, if I win a seat in the House of Commons, you all might be my

constituents!

HIGGINS

Well Alfred, let's not try to look too far into the future. Let it be inscrutable for a while longer.

CURTAIN. END OF THE PLAY.

