

FREDDY

People stop and stare. They don't bother me.
For there's nowhere else on earth that I would rather
be.

Let the time go by,
I won't care if I

Can be here on the street where you live.

(FREDDY settles himself down on the doorstep for
the long wait)

Scene 9

HIGGINS' study. There is a decanter of port and
two glasses on the desk, next to them a carna-
tion.

TIME: Evening. Six weeks later.

AT RISE: HIGGINS, in white tie, is pacing slowly up and
down the room, thoughtfully detached. PICKER-
ING, also formally dressed, is obviously nerv-
ous.

PICKERING

Higgins, if there's any mishap at the Embassy tonight, if
Miss Doolittle suffers any embarrassment whatever, it's
on your head alone. I've been begging you to call off this
experiment ever since Ascot.

HIGGINS

(Calmly) Eliza can do anything. (He continues his
stroll)

PICKERING

But suppose she's discovered? Suppose she makes an-
other ghastly mistake?

HIGGINS

(Good-humoredly) There'll be no horses at the Ball,
Pickering.

PICKERING

(In a panic) But think how agonizing it would be! God,
if anything happened tonight, I don't know what I'd do.

HIGGINS

(Helpfully) You could always rejoin your regiment.

PICKERING

(Exploding) Higgins, this is no time for flippancy. The way you've driven her these last six weeks has exceeded all the bounds of common . . . Oh, for God's sake, Higgins, stop pacing up and down! Can't you settle someplace?

HIGGINS

Have some port. It will quieten your nerves.

PICKERING

I'm not nervous! Where is it?

HIGGINS

On the desk.

(PICKERING goes to it and helps himself to a glass)
(MRS. PEARCE comes out of the door on the landing)

MRS. PEARCE

The car is here, sir.

HIGGINS

Thank you, Mrs. Pearce. Are you helping Eliza?

MRS. PEARCE

Yes, sir. *(She goes)*

PICKERING

Help her, indeed! I'll bet the damned gown doesn't fit. I warned you about those French designers. You should have gone to a good English store, where you knew everybody was on our side. Have a little port.

HIGGINS

No, thank you.

PICKERING

It will quieten your nerves.

HIGGINS

(Still pacing) No, thank you.

PICKERING

(Exasperated) Are you so sure she'll retain all you've hammered into her?

HIGGINS

We shall see.

PICKERING

But suppose she doesn't?

HIGGINS

Then I lose my bet. (*He settles himself comfortably on the sofa*)

PICKERING

(*Slightly irritated*) You know what I can't stand about you, Higgins? It's your confounded complacency. In a moment like this, with so much at stake, it's utterly indecent that you don't need a little port. What of the girl? You act as if she doesn't matter at all.

HIGGINS

Rubbish, Pickering. Of course she matters. What do you think I've been doing all these months? What could possibly matter more than to take a human being and change her into a different human being by creating a new speech for her? Why, it's filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class, and soul from soul. She matters immensely.

(*ELIZA appears on the landing—a vision. She walks down the stairs and into the room. HIGGINS rises. PICKERING is overcome by her appearance. HIGGINS circles her inspecting her carefully*)

PICKERING

Miss Doolittle, you look beautiful.

ELIZA

Thank you, Colonel Pickering.

PICKERING

Don't you think so, Higgins?

(*ELIZA turns to HIGGINS hopefully*)

HIGGINS

(*Having decided the gown is quite all right*) Not bad. Not bad at all.

(*The BUTLER and FOOTMAN enter with coats, hats and ELIZA'S cape and help each into his. HIGGINS goes to the desk for his carnation which he slips into his buttonhole, then looking furtively around*)