Pygmalion

ACT IV

The Wimpole Street laboratory. Midnight. Nobody in the room. The clock

on the mantelpiece strikes twelve. The fire is not alight: it is a

summer night.

Presently Higgins and Pickering are heard on the stairs.

HIGGINS [calling down to Pickering] I say, Pick: lock up, will you. I

shan't be going out again.

PICKERING. Right. Can Mrs. Pearce go to bed? We don't want anything

more, do we?

HIGGINS. Lord, no!

Eliza opens the door and is seen on the lighted landing in opera cloak,

brilliant evening dress, and diamonds, with fan, flowers, and all

accessories. She comes to the hearth, and switches on the electric

lights there. She is tired: her pallor contrasts strongly with her dark

eyes and hair; and her expression is almost tragic. She takes off her

cloak; puts her fan and flowers on the piano; and sits down on the

bench, brooding and silent. Higgins, in evening dress, with overcoat

and hat, comes in, carrying a smoking jacket which he has picked up

downstairs. He takes off the hat and overcoat; throws them carelessly

on the newspaper stand; disposes of his coat in the same way; puts on

the smoking jacket; and throws himself wearily into the easy-chair at

the hearth. Pickering, similarly attired, comes in. He also takes off

his hat and overcoat, and is about to throw them on Higgins's when he

hesitates.

PICKERING. I say: Mrs. Pearce will row if we leave these things lying

about in the drawing-room.

HIGGINS. Oh, chuck them over the bannisters into the hall. She'll find

them there in the morning and put them away all right. She'll think we

were drunk.

PICKERING. We are, slightly. Are there any letters?

HIGGINS. I didn't look. [Pickering takes the overcoats and hats and

goes down stairs. Higgins begins half singing half yawning an air from

La Fanciulla del Golden West. Suddenly he stops and exclaims] I wonder

where the devil my slippers are!

Eliza looks at him darkly; then leaves the room.

Higgins yawns again, and resumes his song. Pickering returns, with the

contents of the letter-box in his hand.

PICKERING. Only circulars, and this coroneted billet-doux for you. [He

throws the circulars into the fender, and posts himself on the

hearthrug, with his back to the grate].

HIGGINS [glancing at the billet-doux] Money-lender. [He throws the

letter after the circulars].

Eliza returns with a pair of large down-at-heel slippers. She places

them on the carpet before Higgins, and sits as before without a word.

HIGGINS [yawning again] Oh Lord! What an evening! What a crew! What a

silly tomfoollery! [He raises his shoe to unlace it, and catches sight

of the slippers. He stops unlacing and looks at them as if they had

appeared there of their own accord]. Oh! they're there, are they?

PICKERING [stretching himself] Well, I feel a bit tired. It's been a

long day. The garden party, a dinner party, and the opera! Rather too

much of a good thing. But you've won your bet, Higgins. Eliza did the

trick, and something to spare, eh?

HIGGINS [fervently] Thank God it's over!

Eliza flinches violently; but they take no notice of her; and she

recovers herself and sits stonily as before.

PICKERING. Were you nervous at the garden party? I was. Eliza didn't

seem a bit nervous.

HIGGINS. Oh, she wasn't nervous. I knew she'd be all right. No, it's

the strain of putting the job through all these months that has told on

me. It was interesting enough at first, while we were at the phonetics;

but after that I got deadly sick of it. If I hadn't backed myself to do

it I should have chucked the whole thing up two months ago. It was a

silly notion: the whole thing has been a bore.

PICKERING. Oh come! the garden party was frightfully exciting. My heart

began beating like anything.

HIGGINS. Yes, for the first three minutes. But when I saw we were going

to win hands down, I felt like a bear in a cage, hanging about doing

nothing. The dinner was worse: sitting gorging there for over an hour,

with nobody but a damned fool of a fashionable woman to talk to! I tell

you, Pickering, never again for me. No more artificial duchesses. The

whole thing has been simple purgatory.

PICKERING. You've never been broken in properly to the social routine.

[Strolling over to the piano] I rather enjoy dipping into it

occasionally myself: it makes me feel young again. Anyhow, it was a

great success: an immense success. I was quite frightened once or twice

because Eliza was doing it so well. You see, lots of the real people

can't do it at all: they're such fools that they think style comes by

nature to people in their position; and so they never learn. There's

always something professional about doing a thing superlatively well.

HIGGINS. Yes: that's what drives me mad: the silly people don't know

their own silly business. [Rising] However, it's over and done with;

and now I can go to bed at last without dreading tomorrow.

Eliza's beauty becomes murderous.

PICKERING. I think I shall turn in too. Still, it's been a great

occasion: a triumph for you. Good-night. [He goes].

HIGGINS [following him] Good-night. [Over his shoulder, at the door]

Put out the lights, Eliza; and tell Mrs. Pearce not to make coffee for

me in the morning: I'll take tea. [He goes out].

Eliza tries to control herself and feel indifferent as she rises and

walks across to the hearth to switch off the lights. By the time she

gets there she is on the point of screaming. She sits down in Higgins's

chair and holds on hard to the arms. Finally she gives way and flings

herself furiously on the floor raging.

HIGGINS [in despairing wrath outside] What the devil have I done with

my slippers? [He appears at the door].

LIZA [snatching up the slippers, and hurling them at him one after the

other with all her force] There are your slippers. And there. Take your

slippers; and may you never have a day's luck with them!

HIGGINS [astounded] What on earth--! [He comes to her]. What's the

matter? Get up. [He pulls her up]. Anything wrong?

LIZA [breathless] Nothing wrong--with YOU. I've won your bet for you,

haven't I? That's enough for you. \_I\_ don't matter, I suppose.

HIGGINS. YOU won my bet! You! Presumptuous insect! \_I\_ won it. What did

you throw those slippers at me for?

LIZA. Because I wanted to smash your face. I'd like to kill you, you

selfish brute. Why didn't you leave me where you picked me out of--in

the gutter? You thank God it's all over, and that now you can throw me

back again there, do you? [She crisps her fingers, frantically].

HIGGINS [looking at her in cool wonder] The creature IS nervous, after

all.

LIZA [gives a suffocated scream of fury, and instinctively darts her

nails at his face]!!

HIGGINS [catching her wrists] Ah! would you? Claws in, you cat. How

dare you show your temper to me? Sit down and be quiet. [He throws her

roughly into the easy-chair].

LIZA [crushed by superior strength and weight] What's to become of me?

What's to become of me?

HIGGINS. How the devil do I know what's to become of you? What does it

matter what becomes of you?

LIZA. You don't care. I know you don't care. You wouldn't care if I was

dead. I'm nothing to you--not so much as them slippers.

HIGGINS [thundering] THOSE slippers.

LIZA [with bitter submission] Those slippers. I didn't think it made

any difference now.

A pause. Eliza hopeless and crushed. Higgins a little uneasy.

HIGGINS [in his loftiest manner] Why have you begun going on like this?

May I ask whether you complain of your treatment here?

LIZA. No.

HIGGINS. Has anybody behaved badly to you? Colonel Pickering? Mrs.

Pearce? Any of the servants?

LIZA. No.

HIGGINS. I presume you don't pretend that I have treated you badly.

LIZA. No.

HIGGINS. I am glad to hear it. [He moderates his tone]. Perhaps you're

tired after the strain of the day. Will you have a glass of champagne?

[He moves towards the door].

LIZA. No. [Recollecting her manners] Thank you.

HIGGINS [good-humored again] This has been coming on you for some days.

I suppose it was natural for you to be anxious about the garden party.

But that's all over now. [He pats her kindly on the shoulder. She

writhes]. There's nothing more to worry about.

LIZA. No. Nothing more for you to worry about. [She suddenly rises and

gets away from him by going to the piano bench, where she sits and

hides her face]. Oh God! I wish I was dead.

HIGGINS [staring after her in sincere surprise] Why? in heaven's name,

why? [Reasonably, going to her] Listen to me, Eliza. All this

irritation is purely subjective.

LIZA. I don't understand. I'm too ignorant.

HIGGINS. It's only imagination. Low spirits and nothing else. Nobody's

hurting you. Nothing's wrong. You go to bed like a good girl and sleep

it off. Have a little cry and say your prayers: that will make you

comfortable.

LIZA. I heard YOUR prayers. "Thank God it's all over!"

HIGGINS [impatiently] Well, don't you thank God it's all over? Now you

are free and can do what you like.

LIZA [pulling herself together in desperation] What am I fit for? What

have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? What's to

become of me?

HIGGINS [enlightened, but not at all impressed] Oh, that's what's

worrying you, is it? [He thrusts his hands into his pockets, and walks

about in his usual manner, rattling the contents of his pockets, as if

condescending to a trivial subject out of pure kindness]. I shouldn't

bother about it if I were you. I should imagine you won't have much

difficulty in settling yourself, somewhere or other, though I hadn't

quite realized that you were going away. [She looks quickly at him: he

does not look at her, but examines the dessert stand on the piano and

decides that he will eat an apple]. You might marry, you know. [He

bites a large piece out of the apple, and munches it noisily]. You see,

Eliza, all men are not confirmed old bachelors like me and the Colonel.

Most men are the marrying sort (poor devils!); and you're not

bad-looking; it's quite a pleasure to look at you sometimes--not now,

of course, because you're crying and looking as ugly as the very devil;

but when you're all right and quite yourself, you're what I should call

attractive. That is, to the people in the marrying line, you

understand. You go to bed and have a good nice rest; and then get up

and look at yourself in the glass; and you won't feel so cheap.

Eliza again looks at him, speechless, and does not stir.

The look is quite lost on him: he eats his apple with a dreamy

expression of happiness, as it is quite a good one.

HIGGINS [a genial afterthought occurring to him] I daresay my mother

could find some chap or other who would do very well--

LIZA. We were above that at the corner of Tottenham Court Road.

HIGGINS [waking up] What do you mean?

LIZA. I sold flowers. I didn't sell myself. Now you've made a lady of

me I'm not fit to sell anything else. I wish you'd left me where you

found me.

HIGGINS [slinging the core of the apple decisively into the grate]

Tosh, Eliza. Don't you insult human relations by dragging all this cant

about buying and selling into it. You needn't marry the fellow if you

don't like him.

LIZA. What else am I to do?

HIGGINS. Oh, lots of things. What about your old idea of a florist's

shop? Pickering could set you up in one: he's lots of money.

[Chuckling] He'll have to pay for all those togs you have been wearing

today; and that, with the hire of the jewellery, will make a big hole

in two hundred pounds. Why, six months ago you would have thought it

the millennium to have a flower shop of your own. Come! you'll be all

right. I must clear off to bed: I'm devilish sleepy. By the way, I came

down for something: I forget what it was.

LIZA. Your slippers.

HIGGINS. Oh yes, of course. You shied them at me. [He picks them up,

and is going out when she rises and speaks to him].

LIZA. Before you go, sir--

HIGGINS [dropping the slippers in his surprise at her calling him sir]

Eh?

LIZA. Do my clothes belong to me or to Colonel Pickering?

HIGGINS [coming back into the room as if her question were the very

climax of unreason] What the devil use would they be to Pickering?

LIZA. He might want them for the next girl you pick up to experiment on.

HIGGINS [shocked and hurt] Is THAT the way you feel towards us?

LIZA. I don't want to hear anything more about that. All I want to know

is whether anything belongs to me. My own clothes were burnt.

HIGGINS. But what does it matter? Why need you start bothering about

that in the middle of the night?

LIZA. I want to know what I may take away with me. I don't want to be

accused of stealing.

HIGGINS [now deeply wounded] Stealing! You shouldn't have said that,

Eliza. That shows a want of feeling.

LIZA. I'm sorry. I'm only a common ignorant girl; and in my station I

have to be careful. There can't be any feelings between the like of you

and the like of me. Please will you tell me what belongs to me and what

doesn't?

HIGGINS [very sulky] You may take the whole damned houseful if you

like. Except the jewels. They're hired. Will that satisfy you? [He

turns on his heel and is about to go in extreme dudgeon].

LIZA [drinking in his emotion like nectar, and nagging him to provoke a

further supply] Stop, please. [She takes off her jewels]. Will you take

these to your room and keep them safe? I don't want to run the risk of

their being missing.

HIGGINS [furious] Hand them over. [She puts them into his hands]. If

these belonged to me instead of to the jeweler, I'd ram them down your

ungrateful throat. [He perfunctorily thrusts them into his pockets,

unconsciously decorating himself with the protruding ends of the

chains].

LIZA [taking a ring off] This ring isn't the jeweler's: it's the one

you bought me in Brighton. I don't want it now. [Higgins dashes the

ring violently into the fireplace, and turns on her so threateningly

that she crouches over the piano with her hands over her face, and

exclaims] Don't you hit me.

HIGGINS. Hit you! You infamous creature, how dare you accuse me of such

a thing? It is you who have hit me. You have wounded me to the heart.

LIZA [thrilling with hidden joy] I'm glad. I've got a little of my own

back, anyhow.

HIGGINS [with dignity, in his finest professional style] You have

caused me to lose my temper: a thing that has hardly ever happened to

me before. I prefer to say nothing more tonight. I am going to bed.

LIZA [pertly] You'd better leave a note for Mrs. Pearce about the

coffee; for she won't be told by me.

HIGGINS [formally] Damn Mrs. Pearce; and damn the coffee; and damn you;

and damn my own folly in having lavished MY hard-earned knowledge and

the treasure of my regard and intimacy on a heartless guttersnipe. [He

goes out with impressive decorum, and spoils it by slamming the door

savagely].

Eliza smiles for the first time; expresses her feelings by a wild

pantomime in which an imitation of Higgins's exit is confused with her

own triumph; and finally goes down on her knees on the hearthrug to

look for the ring.