

Eliza, Freddy, Mrs Higgins, Mrs Gynsford-Hill

MY FAIR LADY

- 69 -

Act 1 Scene 7

ELIZA

(Turning to HIM at UL)

How do you do?

FREDDY

(Xing D to HER)

How do you do?

(MRS. HIGGINS pours tea. HIGGINS is behind L pouffe)

HIGGINS

Miss Doolittle?

ELIZA

(X to R of L Pouffe)

Good afternoon, Professor Higgins.

(HIGGINS motions for HER to sit, SHE looks at HIM blankly - HE pantomimes sitting down - SHE does.)

The STEWARDS bring chairs for PICKERING and FREDDY at UC, then pass tea to all the guests)

FREDDY

The first race was very exciting, Miss Doolittle. I'm so sorry you missed it.

MRS. HIGGINS

(Handing ELIZA tea)

Will it rain do you think?

ELIZA

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain.

(HIGGINS irresistibly does a few fandango steps which win HIM peculiar looks. HE Xes UC)

But in Hartford, Heresford and Hampshire hurricanes hardly ever happen.

FREDDY

(Laughing)

How awfully funny.

ELIZA

What is wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right.

FREDDY

Smashing.

(Takes tea from STEWARD)

MRS. EYNSFORD-HILL

I do hope we won't have any unseasonably cold spells. It brings on so much influenza, and our whole family is susceptible to it.

ELIZA

My aunt died of influenza, so they said.

(MRS. EYNSFORD-HILL clicks HER tongue sympathetically)

But it's my belief they done the old woman in.

(HIGGINS and PICKERING have a soundless argument, accusing each other of having taught ELIZA this last unrehearsed phrase)

MRS. HIGGINS

(Puzzled)

Done her in?

ELIZA

Yes, Lord love you! Why should she die of influenza when she come through diphtheria right enough the year before? Fairly blue with it she was. They all thought she was dead; but my father, he kept ladling gin down her throat.

(HIGGINS for want of something else to do, balances HIS tea cup on HIS head and Xes UL)

Then she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon.

MRS. EYNSFORD-HILL

Dear me!

ELIZA

Now, what call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza, and what become of her new straw hat that should have come to me?

(Sips tea)

Somebody pinched it;

(HIGGINS fans himself with silver tray off the tea cart)

and what I say is, them as pinched it, done her in.

LORD BOXINGTON

Done her in? Done her in, did you say?

HIGGINS

(X to UC between PICKERING and FREDDY)

Oh, that's the new small talk. To do a person in means to kill them.

MRS. EYNSFORD-HILL

(To ELIZA, horrified)

You surely don't believe your aunt was killed?

(HIGGINS and PICKERING expect the worst)

ELIZA

Do I not! Them she lived with would have killed her for a hatpin, let alone a hat.

MRS. EYNSFORD-HILL

But it can't have been right for your father to pour spirits down her throat like that. It might have killed her.

ELIZA

Not her. Gin was mother's milk to her.

(HIGGINS stiffens; PICKERING is tense. HIGGINS bows and lifts HIS hat to MRS. EYNSFORD-HILL in a gesture of farewell, and Xes DL. Puts cup down on cart)

Besides, he's poured so much down his own throat that he knew the good of it.

LORD BOXINGTON

Do you mean that he drank?

(LADY BOXINGTON tries to quieten LORD BOXINGTON but HE will not be silenced)

ELIZA

(Giving tea cup back to MRS. HIGGINS)

Drank! My word! Something chronic.

(To FREDDY who is in convulsions of suppressed laughter)

Here! What are you sniggering at!

FREDDY

The new small talk. You do it so awfully well.

ELIZA

If I was doing it proper, what was you laughing at?

(To HIGGINS)

Have I said anything I oughtn't?

(HIGGINS makes a helpless gesture)

MRS. HIGGINS

Not at all, my dear.

ELIZA

Well, that's a mercy, anyhow.

(Now expansively)

~~What I always say is..~~

(HIGGINS makes a number of desperate signals to PICKERING to stop HER at all costs)