Doolittle [*at the door, uncertain which of the two gentlemen is his man*] Professor Higgins?

Higgins. Here. Good morning. Sit down.

Doolittle. Morning, Governor. [*He sits down magisterially*] I come about a very serious matter, Governor.

Higgins [*to Pickering*] Brought up in Hounslow. Mother Welsh, I should think. [*Doolittle opens his mouth, amazed. Higgins continues*] What do you want, Doolittle?

Doolittle [*menacingly*] I want my daughter: that’s what I want. See?

Higgins. Of course you do. You’re her father, aren’t you? You don’t suppose anyone else wants her, do you? I’m glad to see you have some spark of family feeling left. She’s upstairs. Take her away at once.

Doolittle [*rising, fearfully taken aback*] What!

Higgins. Take her away. Do you suppose I’m going to keep your daughter for you?

Doolittle [*remonstrating*] Now, now, look here, Governor. Is this reasonable? Is it fair to take advantage of a man like this? The girl belongs to me. You got her. Where do I come in? [*He sits down again*].

Higgins. Your daughter had the audacity to come to my house and ask me to teach her how to speak properly so that she could get a place in a flower-shop. This gentleman and my housekeeper have been here all the time. [*Bullying him*] How dare you come here and attempt to blackmail me? You sent her here on purpose.

Doolittle [*protesting*] No, Governor.

Higgins. You must have. How else could you possibly know that she is here?

Doolittle. Don’t take a man up like that, Governor.

Higgins. The police shall take you up. This is a plant — a plot to extort money by threats. I shall telephone for the police [*he goes resolutely to the telephone and opens the directory*].

Doolittle. Have I asked you for a brass farthing? I leave it to the gentleman here: have I said a word about money?

Higgins [*throwing the book aside and marching down on Doolittle with a poser*] What else did you come for?

Doolittle [*sweetly*] Well, what would a man come for? Be human, governor.

Higgins [*disarmed*] Alfred: did you put her up to it?

Doolittle. So help me, Governor, I never did. I take my Bible oath I ain’t seen the girl these two months past.

Higgins. Then how did you know she was here?

Doolittle [*“most musical, most melancholy”*] I’ll tell you, Governor, if you’ll only let me get a word in. I’m willing to tell you. I’m wanting to tell you. I’m waiting to tell you.

Higgins. Pickering: this chap has a certain natural gift of rhetoric. Observe the rhythm of his native woodnotes wild. “I’m willing to tell you: I’m wanting to tell you: I’m waiting to tell you.” Sentimental rhetoric! That’s the Welsh strain in him. It also accounts for his mendacity and dishonesty.

Pickering. Oh, PLEASE, Higgins: I’m west country myself. [*To Doolittle*] How did you know the girl was here if you didn’t send her?

Doolittle. It was like this, Governor. The girl took a boy in the taxi to give him a jaunt. Son of her landlady, he is. He hung about on the chance of her giving him another ride home. Well, she sent him back for her luggage when she heard you was willing for her to stop here. I met the boy at the corner of Long Acre and Endell Street.

Higgins. Public house. Yes?

Doolittle. The poor man’s club, Governor: why shouldn’t I?

Pickering. Do let him tell his story, Higgins.

Doolittle. He told me what was up. And I ask you, what was my feelings and my duty as a father? I says to the boy, “You bring me the luggage,” I says —

Pickering. Why didn’t you go for it yourself?

Doolittle. Landlady wouldn’t have trusted me with it, Governor. She’s that kind of woman: you know. I had to give the boy a penny afore he trusted me with it, the little swine. I brought it to her just to oblige you like, and make myself agreeable. That’s all.

Higgins. How much luggage?

Doolittle. Musical instrument, Governor. A few pictures, a trifle of jewelry, and a bird-cage. She said she didn’t want no clothes. What was I to think from that, Governor? I ask you as a parent what was I to think?

Higgins. So you came to rescue her from worse than death, eh?

Doolittle [*appreciatively: relieved at being understood*] Just so, Governor. That’s right.

Pickering. But why did you bring her luggage if you intended to take her away?

Doolittle. Have I said a word about taking her away? Have I now?

Higgins [*determinedly*] You’re going to take her away, double quick. [*He crosses to the hearth and rings the bell*].

Doolittle [*rising*] No, Governor. Don’t say that. I’m not the man to stand in my girl’s light. Here’s a career opening for her, as you might say; and —

*Mrs. Pearce opens the door and awaits orders.*

Higgins. Mrs. Pearce: this is Eliza’s father. He has come to take her away. Give her to him. [*He goes back to the hearth, with an air of washing his hands of the whole affair*].

Doolittle. No. This is a misunderstanding. Listen here —