



R. Eugene Jackson

Inspired by George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*

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My Fair Redneck

SPOOF/FARCE. Inspired by George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*. Elizabeth hasn't been in a movie for more than a year, so her agent, Freddie-Eddie, urges her to audition for the leading role of a redneck in an upcoming movie. As luck would have it, Elizabeth and Freddie-Eddie encounter a real redneck, Henry Piggins, selling wilted flowers on the street. Freddie-Eddie hires Piggins to teach Elizabeth his redneck ways and promptly drops Elizabeth off in the swamp at Hank's dilapidated trailer. There, Elizabeth meets Hank's mama and sister, Sissy Lou. The Piggins introduce Elizabeth to redneck ways of life like how to cut yer toenails with a tree branch lopper and how to eat mudbugs off a toilet seat. As Elizabeth struggles with learning how to talk and act like a redneck, Hank realizes it may be a tad harder than he thought makin' a redneck outta her!

Performance Time: Approximately 75-90 minutes.



From left to right: George Bernard Shaw in 1914; Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Eliza Doolittle in the 1914 stage production; Julie Andrews as Eliza Doolittle opposite Rex Harrison as Henry Higgins in the 1956 Broadway musical adaptation, *My Fair Lady*.

About the Story

Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was born in Dublin. Though his father was an alcoholic and the family lived in poverty, Shaw was introduced to theater by one of his mother's friends, George John Lee, who was well known in Dublin's theater circles. Though Shaw wrote many plays in his lifetime, *Pygmalion* (1912) remains his most popular. The play's title refers to Pygmalion, the Greek mythological figure who fell in love with one of his own sculptures. In *Pygmalion*, Shaw satirizes the rigid English class system of his day. Henry Higgins, a phonetics professor, makes a bet that he can teach a Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, how to pass as a duchess just by looking and speaking like one. The play premiered in Vienna in 1913 and opened in London in 1914. The 1956 Broadway musical adaptation by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe starred Julie Andrews as Eliza Doolittle and Rex Harrison as Henry Higgins. The 1964 film version, which starred Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison, won eight Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Actor for Harrison.

Characters

(3 M, 6 F, 5 flexible)

ELIZABETH ROTHSCHILD DOOLITTLE: An actress who needs to learn how to act and speak like a redneck in order to audition for an upcoming movie; speaks in a stilted style; wears a stylish dress, an outrageously gaudy hat, and high heels; female.

FREDDIE-EDDIE: Elizabeth's agent; wears an expensive-looking suit and tie; male.

HANK PIGGINS: An authentic redneck who tries to teach Elizabeth how to act and speak like a redneck; wears typical redneck clothing, worn boots, and has a dirty handkerchief hanging from his back pocket; male.

MAMA: Hank's redneck mother; wears mismatched, worn clothes and old-fashioned eyeglasses; female.

SISSY LOU: Hank's redneck sister; wears a long homemade dress that has a dark spot on the front; her hair is a mess and she has a missing front tooth; female.

COLONEL SNICKERING: Hank's friend, a redneck neighbor who lives on a boat in the swamp; wears a worn skirt or pants, oversized military boots, and a military-looking jacket with assorted medals on it and a large pin that reads "Colonel" attached to the breast pocket; her right eye is black and blue due to hitting herself when saluting; flexible.

SHERIFF: Local redneck sheriff with a goofy laugh who is sweet on Sissy Lou; has to keep pulling his pants up over his skinny belly but his pants just keep sliding down; has the same missing front tooth as Sissy Lou; wears a sheriff's uniform with an old worn hat and a badge pinned to his shirt; male.

DEPUTY: The Sheriff's redneck deputy, flexible.

MRS. DOOLITTLE: Elizabeth's mother, a "wealthy" and clumsy upper-class snob; wears a stylish dress; speaks in a stilted style; female.

MRS. EYNSFORD: Elizabeth's aunt, a "rich" upper-class snob; speaks in a stilted style; wears a stylish dress; female.

MISS CLARA: Elizabeth's cousin and Mrs. Eynsford's daughter; speaks in a stilted style; wears a stylish dress; female.

MEEKO: Movie director; wears a beret, ascot, and a sweater hung over his shoulders; flexible.

ADELL: Meeko's aide; flexible.

TONY/TONI: Meeko's aide, flexible.

Author's Note

Generally, "rednecks" are folks who have worked in the sun so often the backs of their necks have turned red. We respect rednecks as we do all cultural groups and this spoof is intended as good-natured fun.

Redneck Pronunciation Note

The sound of "I" has two parts: "I" and "ee" (eye-ee). For this play, use a flat "I" sound and eliminate the "ee" part. Other redneck pronunciations are included in the script.

Setting

Hank's trailer, somewhere between Polecat Road and Alligator Bayou.

Sets

A city street in front of an opera house. A backdrop may be used or a bare stage will suffice.

Hank's trailer in the swamp. Part of the exterior of a dilapidated trailer is ULC. It has a usable door. A "Fer Sale" sign written in big letters with the "s" written backward is attached to it. A large tub is sits atop a "fire" at SLC and old chairs or tree stumps are positioned around it. Moss hangs from the trees.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: In the city on the street outside an opera house.

Scene 2: Hank's trailer in the swamp, a week later.

Intermission

ACT II

Scene 1: Hank's trailer in the swamp, a minute earlier.

Scene 2: Hank's trailer in the swamp, two weeks later.

Scene 3: Hank's trailer in the swamp, several days later.

Scene 4: Hank's trailer in the swamp, later.

Scene 5: Hank's trailer in the swamp, one day later.

Props

Cane or umbrella, for Mrs. E	Sock with toe area missing, for Hank
Handkerchief, for Freddie	Small bag of "crawfish" (unseen crawfish)
Tattered cardboard box with a rope attached to it (rope goes around Hank's neck.)	Small corncob pipe, for Sissy Lou (opt.)
Assorted wilted, dying plants and flowers	Old fashioned iron (type that is heated on a stove)
Twigs	Large bag of "crawfish" (unseen crawfish)
Large, dirty handkerchief, for Hank	Toy shotgun or rifle
Wallet filled with money, for Freddie	Spider webs, leaves, vines, branches to attach to clothing (can be attached with Velcro)
Play money	2 Checks
Sign that reads, "Fer Sale" is posted on Hank's trailer (the "s" is printed backward)	Cup
Large washtub	Necklace of "bullets" (can be empty shells or toy ammunition)
Old chairs or tree stumps to sit on	Fancy purse, for Mrs. Doolittle
Large tree limb lopper	Dirty undergarments (bloomers, T-shirt), for Elizabeth
Cup or dipper	Exact copy of Sissy Lou's dress but with no spot on it, for Elizabeth
Mop	Small corncob pipe exactly like Sissy Lou's pipe, for Elizabeth (opt.)
Assorted medals, for Colonel's jacket	Pliers
Large corncob pipe, for Mama (opt.)	Empty soup can
Old-fashioned eyeglasses, for Mama	
Dirty, wet shirt	

5 toilet seats with numerous brown spots/smudges on them	Clown costume with wig, tie, shoes, for Mrs. Doolittle
Messy, stringy, drippy blob (for overcooked crawfish)	Several inflated balloons
Toy pistol and holster, for Sheriff	Hat pin
Two rolls of duct tape (different colors)	Real crawfish (cooked)
	Strainer
	Movie script

Special Effects

Street sounds/traffic
Crickets
Rustling of tree branches and leaves as if someone is trudging through thick brush
Gunshots
Blackened front tooth, for Sissy Lou and the Sheriff Tooth blackout (Makeup, black wax, magic shop, etc.)
Loud cough

“Havin’ red makeup
don’t make yew no redneck, Miss Liza.”

—Hank

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: A city street in front of an opera house. Street sounds are heard. Wringing her hands excitedly and smiling, Elizabeth enters, followed by Freddie-Eddie, Mrs. E, and Clara. Mrs. E is carrying a cane or umbrella. All are rich and snobbish and speak in a stilted style. Elizabeth pulls away from the others.)

MRS. E: What a delightful opera!

CLARA: I agree, ma-ma. A delightful opera.

FREDDIE: I'm afraid I couldn't understand a word they said.

MRS. E: Perhaps that's because they were singing in Italian.

FREDDIE: (*Embarrassed.*) Oh, Mrs. E, of course. Of course, they were. I knew that. I was simply...um...providing a little jocularly. (*Laughs awkwardly.*)

MRS. E: (*Nose in the air.*) Yes, well, you are a jocular person. Every time you speak, I laugh.

FREDDIE: Why, thank you, Mrs. E. (*Slight pause.*) I think.

CLARA: Ma-ma?

MRS. E: Yes, my dear?

CLARA: I am so totally exhausted from all this standing. (*Big sigh.*)

FREDDIE: All this standing?! We just sat through a 4-hour opera!

MRS. E: Freddie-Eddie?

FREDDIE: Yes, madam?

MRS. E: Please discontinue your jocularly and get us a taxi.

FREDDIE: Um...yes, madam. (*Looks up and down the street. Calls.*) Taxi! Taxi! Oh, taxi-taxi-taxi! Taxi-taxi-taxi-taxi! Ta-a-a-xi! (*To Mrs. E.*) I don't see any taxis.

MRS. E: Then go down to the next street and find one.

FREDDIE: And if there isn't one there, either?

MRS. E: Freddie-Eddie, go!

FREDDIE: *(Hesitantly.)* Yes, madam. Certainly, madam.
(Starts to exit SR but pauses.)

MRS. E.: Meanwhile Clara and I shall admire the majestic architecture of this historic opera house. Would you care to accompany us, Elizabeth, dear?

ELIZABETH: No, Auntie. I think I will admire it from here.

MRS. E: Very well. Come along, Clara.

(With their noses in the air, Mrs. E and Clara prance off SL. Freddie glances back at Elizabeth and looks SL to be sure Mrs. E and Clara are gone. Freddie sneaks over to Elizabeth.)

FREDDIE: Elizabeth?

(Elizabeth turns to him.)

ELIZABETH: Yes?

(Freddie takes her hands in his.)

FREDDIE: You know I adore you.

ELIZABETH: *(Looking at their hands.)* Freddie-Eddie, what are you doing?

FREDDIE: Holding your lovely hands...kissing them. *(Kisses her hands many times.)*

ELIZABETH: No, you're not. You're slobbering on them.

FREDDIE: *(Realizes.)* Oh! So sorry. So very sorry. *(Lets go of her hands, pulls out a handkerchief, and starts to roughly dry her hands with it.)* I do tend to slobber at times. This must be one of those times. *(Examines the slobber on his handkerchief and can't decide which pocket to put it into.)* Uhhh...

ELIZABETH: Freddie-Eddie?

FREDDIE: *(Too loudly.)* What?! *(Calms down.)* I mean, I mean, why don't you keep this. *(Holds the handkerchief out to her.)*

ELIZABETH: Your hankie? It has slobber on it.

FREDDIE: (*Looking closely at his handkerchief.*) Oh. So it does.
Is that my slobber or your slobber?

ELIZABETH: (*Insulted.*) Freddie-Eddie, I don't slobber.

FREDDIE: Oh. Well, it must be mine then, eh? (*Folds the handkerchief over the slobber and puts it into one of his pockets. Clears his throat.*) Let's start over again, shall we? Um...my dear, have you been practicing for your upcoming audition?

ELIZABETH: No. No, I haven't. I'm sorry. I simply do not think that particular role is right for me. I mean, I am a lady of refinement. I simply cannot play a...a...a redneck. Ick! (*Shivers.*)

FREDDIE: Sure, you can. It's a leading role. It'll perk up your résumé. It'll show directors how versatile you are.

ELIZABETH: But...a redneck?

FREDDIE: You haven't had a movie in over a year, Elizabeth. This could be your last chance.

ELIZABETH: Don't you see? It is so beneath me. You are my agent, aren't you? Then, surely, you can find me a role more befitting an aristocrat such as myself.

FREDDIE: At least consider the redneck part, will you?

ELIZABETH: I don't know. (*Changes the subject. Excited.*) Freddie-Eddie, did you see the hero of the opera remove his shirt...in full view of the audience?

FREDDIE: I beg your pardon?

ELIZABETH: He was so...sooooo handsome!

FREDDIE: (*Jealous.*) I didn't find him sooooo handsome!

ELIZABETH: Of course not. And you would never take your shirt off, would you?

(*Freddie pulls his coat lapels over his shirt to hide his chest.*)

FREDDIE: (*Horried.*) Heavens! Of course not! I'm *civilized!*

(*Mrs. E and Clara enter SL.*)

MRS. E: (*Looking around.*) Freddie-Eddie, where is our taxi?

FREDDIE: Oh, uh... (*Looks SR.*) Yes. Yes, I see one around the corner.

MRS. E: (*To Clara.*) He can see around corners now?

FREDDIE: I'll get it. (*Stumbles.*) Oops! (*To Mrs. E.*) I seem to have stumbled. Did I stumble? Or did I just put the wrong foot in front of the right foot?

MRS. E/CLARA: (*Scolding.*) Freddie-Eddie!

FREDDIE: Yes. Yes, I see a taxi. I'll get it right away.

MRS. E: Well, don't just stand there...go!

FREDDIE: Yes, madam. Of course. Here I go. (*Exits but instantly reappears.*) A taxi, right? I'm after a taxi? (*Mrs. E threatens him with her cane.*) Yeiiiiii! (*Exits SR.*)

MRS. E: (*To Clara.*) He is such a clumsy booby. I don't know why Elizabeth puts up with him.

CLARA: Two reasons, ma-ma. First, he's her agent. Without him, she never would have become a movie star. Second... (*Sighs.*) ...he's very handsome.

MRS. E: (*Disapproves.*) Hurumph! Let's look further, shall we?

(Clara and Mrs. E exit SL. Hank, an authentic redneck, enters SR, carrying a tattered cardboard box held up by a rope around his neck. Inside the box are assorted wilted plants and flowers plus a spray can. He wears redneck clothes and has a big dirty handkerchief hanging from his back pocket. He approaches Elizabeth.)

HANK: (*Hawking his items.*) [Fly'ers]! Fly'ers fer sale! Fly'ers! [*"flowers"*]

ELIZABETH: Flyers? How curious! You are selling airplane pilots?

HANK: They'ur mighty cheap.

ELIZABETH: Airplane pilots are cheap?

HANK: No, [my'um]. Fly'ers. Like these hyer roses an' tulips an' chrysanthe-mummies. [*"ma'am"*]

ELIZABETH: Oh. You mean... (*Pronounces clearly.*) ..."flowers."

HANK: Ain't that whut I just [say-ed]? [*"said"*]

ELIZABETH: I do not see any flowers, my good man. All I see are broken stems and dried up twigs, and I would not pay a penny for any of them.

HANK: Well, my'um, that's good... 'cause they cost more'n a penny. Like maybe a dollar er two... er ten or twenty.

ELIZABETH: Oh, my heavens! Twenty dollars for dead flowers?! (*To no one.*) Save me from this filthy, vulgar... beggar.

(Elizabeth turns away from Hank.)

HANK: [Way-ull], pardon [may], my'um, but I ain't no beggar. I'm a hard-workin' fly'er-seller [may-un]. [*"well"*] [*"me"*] [*"man"*]

ELIZABETH: Please move away from me. You... you smell bad. (*Holds her nose.*)

HANK: I smay-ull [by-ud]? Why tha-ut they-ur ain't possible. No, my'um. I cain't smay-ull by-ud. Why I jist took a bath a week 'er two ago. An' my sister, Sissy Lou, she done scrubbed my [by-eck] an' under my arms real good. [*"bad"*] [*"back"*]

ELIZABETH: (*Still holding her nose.*) You let your sister scrub your naked back?

HANK: Why, yes, my'um... 'cause, ya see, I cain't reach back [care]. [*"there"*]

ELIZABETH: (*Smiles.*) How daring! (*Soberly.*) But you still smell bad.

HANK: Way-ull, I can fix tha-ut. (*Pulls a spray can from his box, pulls his shirt up, and squirts both underarms as best he can.*) [They-ur]. (*Sniffs his armpits.*) Tha-ut they-er's better. Wanna smell? [*"there"*]

(Henry shoves one underarm into her face.)

ELIZABETH: Peee-ew! That has the awful essence of a bug spray.

(Elizabeth turns away from Hank.)

HANK: [Yea-us], my'um. Keeps the skeeters away. An' gators don't like it none neither. ["yes"]

ELIZABETH: But it reeks! It's vile. Please go away, young man.

(Freddie-Eddie enters SR, sees Elizabeth and Hank, and angrily crosses to them.)

FREDDIE: *(To Elizabeth, indicating Hank.)* Is this man bothering you, Elizabeth? Because if he is.... *(Assumes a fighting pose.)* ...I'll...I'll punch him in the nose!

(Mrs. E and Clara enter SL.)

MRS. E: Freddie-Eddie, did you find us a cab?

CLARA: Yes, Freddie-Eddie, did you find us a cab? I'm tired of standing. I want to sit.

FREDDIE: *(Drops his fighting pose.)* Yes, madam. I found us a cab...two blocks down and three blocks over. *(Puts his fists up and assumes fighting stance.)*

CLARA: *(Shocked.)* Two blocks plus three blocks? *(Thinks hard.)* But that's...that's... *(Counts on her fingers.)* That's six or seven blocks...or maybe even eleven blocks.

FREDDIE: That's five blocks, Miss Clara. Two plus three is five.

CLARA: Oh! That's even farther, isn't it?

HANK: Any of y'all in-te-rested in buyin' some fly'ers? I got all kinds.

FREDDIE: Flyers?

ELIZABETH: *(Correcting.)* "Flowers."

FREDDIE: *(Confused.)* Flyers are flowers?

HANK: I got pink 'ens, red 'ens, blue 'ens. Any color yew can wont. Right [cheer]. [*"want"*] [*"here"*]

ELIZABETH: Give him some money, Freddie-Eddie, so he'll go away and leave us alone.

FREDDIE: (*To Hank, excited.*) Sir, are you, by any chance, a...a...red...neck?

HANK: Well, I'm out in the sun a lot, ya know, so my neck might be a bit [ray-ed]. And so's my back, ya know, 'cause I don't wear no shirt some o' the time. [*"red"*]

ELIZABETH: (*Shocked.*) You mean, you go...*shirtless*?

HANK: Well, yea-uh.

ELIZABETH: (*Excited.*) Oh, my! Shirtless! (*Giggles.*)

MRS. E: (*Horrorified.*) Shirtless?

CLARA: (*Horrorified.*) Shirtless?

FREDDIE: (*To Women.*) He is a redneck! A real red...neck!

HANK: (*Correcting.*) An' a red back. Don't fergit tha-ut.

FREDDIE: My dear man, do you, perchance, have a business card?

HANK: No, but I have some poker cards. Missin' a ace an' a queen o' hearts, though.

FREDDIE: Yes. Yes, I understand. But what is your name, and where do you live?

HANK: (*Suspicious.*) Why do yew wanna know tha-ut?

FREDDIE: Never mind why. (*Pulls out his wallet and takes a single bill from it.*) Just tell me who and where.

(*Freddie tosses the bill into Hank's cardboard box.*)

HANK: (*Perks up.*) Way-ull, thank ya kindly. Which twig do yew wont?

(*Freddie takes a twig from Hank's box and holds it up. Elizabeth giggles and takes the twig from him.*)

ELIZABETH: Are you married?

HANK: Huh?

FREDDIE: Your name?

HANK: Way-ull, I'm Henry Piggins.

FREDDIE: Henry Piggins?

HANK: Yea-us. My [free-uns] call me Hank. [*"friends"*]

FREDDIE: Well, now, Hank—

HANK: But yew ain't my free-un. (*Freddie drops another bill into Hank's cardboard box.*) Way-ull! Thank yew...free-un. Call me Hank.

FREDDIE: How do we get to your place...Hank?

HANK: Well, foller highway US143896414432268...B to this big ol' sign whut says "Polecat Road."

FREDDIE: So I turn on Polecat Road.

HANK: Why would yew wanna turn on Polecat Road?

FREDDIE: To get to your place.

HANK: My place ain't on Polecat Road.

FREDDIE: Well, sir, you just said—

HANK: When yew git to the big ol' sign whut says "Polecat Road," yew make a u-turn 'cause yew done gone too fer.

FREDDIE: (*Confused.*) Too...fer?

HANK: So yew make a turn a-round an' drive to Alligator Bayou.

FREDDIE: Alligator Bayou.

HANK: If'n yew drive into the bayou, yew done went too fer.

An' yew'll pro'bly get [et] by a gator. [*"ate"*]

FREDDIE: Oh, dear. I don't think I would like that.

[END OF FREEVIEW]