

S5 E25 - The White Box of Great Bardfield

Transcribed by Kurt Adkins and Tony Wills, adjusted by Peter Olausson. Final corrections by Helen.

GREENSLADE:

This is the BBC Home Service. (STRAINED) And I'm getting fed up saying it! I am, really, I am!

SECOMBE:

Steady, Mr Greenslade. Wallace. Wallace, control yourself. Stand by to hear those two sons of filth - Fred Socrates and partner!

ORCHESTRA:

VARIETY THEATRE INTRO

SOCRATES:

[SELLERS]

Thank you, thank you, thank you, ladies and gentlemen. And now a little monologue entitled, "The Canterbury Bells won't ring tonight, the old Dean's dropped another clanger!" It was Christmas night in the workhouse...

MILLIGAN:

I say! I say! I say! I say! I say!

SOCRATES:

You rude man, will you kindly not interrupt my act when I'm entertaining these nice ladies and gentlemen?

MILLIGAN:

I say, can you tell me what is it that has eight wheels and flies?

SOCRATES:

What is it that has eight wheels and flies?

MILLIGAN:

Yes, what is it that has eight wheels and flies?

SOCRATES:

I don't know. What is it that has eight wheels and flies?

MILLIGAN:

Two corporation dust carts.

SOCRATES:

I don't wish to know that!

SOCRATES & MILLIGAN:

(SINGING) That's why we're arm in arm together... Just like we used to beeee...

ORCHESTRA:

PUNCHLINE FANFARE

SECOMBE:

And so ends a farewell tribute to Kenneth Adam from his dear friends in the highly esteemed... Goon Show!

GRAMS:

FLUTE PLAYING SNAKE CHARMING TUNE

SEAGOON:

London, nineteen hundred and one. That was a good year for England. Well, we'd have looked silly with out it wouldn't we. Ha ha ha! I remember one lunch hour, I was stalking a pigeon in Trafalgar Square... when suddenly, in my driving mirror, I observed a large crowd of women gathered around a very tall Scotsman.

OMNES:

(FEMININE) Whooooooooooooo!

SEAGOON:

He spoke.

OMNES:

BABBLING IN BACKGROUND

ELLINGTON:

Ma friends, ma friends. I will pay ten shillings to any man who can escape from these chains.

SEAGOON:

Ten shillings?

GRAMS:

WHOOOSH

SEAGOON:

I accept the challenge Ginger!

ELLINGTON:

Right! Put yer hands behind yer back...

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING

ELLINGTON:

Now let's see if I can get these chains...

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING IN THE BACKGROUND

SEAGOON:

Fool. Little does he know that these iron chains, leg shackles, hand cuffs and straitjacket can't keep me prisoner for more than a second because, dear listener - Heheheh - I am none other than Ned Seagoon, Son of Houdini!

ORCHESTRA:

FLAT FANFARE AND CYMBAL CRASH

SEAGOON:

Thank yewww! Yes, Son of Houdini. Wose book on how to escape I have sewn in the lining of my wig.

ELLINGTON:

Right! Right, now, that's it. Ten shillings if you can get out of that lot.

SEAGOON:

Money for jam. Heheheh. All I have to do is to...

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING

SEAGOON:

...flick my wrists so. (STRUGGLING) Raise my elbow... above my nose. Urghh! I'll be free in a second. Haha, nothing can hold me. Me, Son of Houdini.

ORCHESTRA:

FLAT FANFARE AND CYMBAL CRASH

SEAGOON:

Thank you. (PUFFING) Now, I raise my right knee and place it under... Yes... I'll be free in a second. (FADES OUT)

(PAUSE)

GRAMS:

BIG BEN CHIMING TWELVE TIMES FOR A LONG TIME

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING

SEAGOON:

Now (STRUGGLING AND PUFFING) I'll just get my left foot under my right arm. I'll be free in a second.

ELLINGTON:

Man, you said that thirteen hours ago.

SEAGOON:

I'm just teasing you.

ELLINGTON:

Well, I'm just going home.

SEAGOON:

Oh, no, you don't! Have that ten shillings ready. I'll be free in a trice. Hahahah! Remember, nothing can hold Ned, son of Houdini!

ORCHESTRA:

FLAT FANFARE AND CYMBAL CRASH

SEAGOON:

Thank you. (STRUGGLING) Urghhh! Now, I just stand on my head and slip my waist over my knees. Ohhrrgggg. Ahhh, watch the ol' tenor's friend there... ah! I... I'll get free if I go black in the face.

ELLINGTON:

Man, that's how I got free!

SEAGOON:

Towards dawn he left me. Then...

MORIARTY:

Hawwwwwww... (SINGING) April in Paris. Chestnuts in blossom... (STOPS SINGING) Hor-hor, what is this chain covered Charlie in the gutter?

SEAGOON:

The stranger was a tall, hairy man wearing reversible Jewish socks and an explodable sporran.

MORIARTY:

(FRENCH ACCENT) Otch, aye, mon ami. 'Tis a braw, bruck, moonlick nick, this night.

SEAGOON:

A Scotsman, by jove. He approached with his kilt at the high port.

MORIARTY:

Otch, aye.

SEAGOON:

Otch, aye, to be sure. Who are you?

MORIARTY:

Allow me.

SEAGOON:

The stranger stepped back. Raised the tail of his shirt. And revealed a centrally heated brass name plate. By the side was a bell.

FX:

DOOR BELL RINGS; DOOR HANDLE RATTLES OPEN

MORIARTY:

Sapristi nyackos! It's you, again. Come in.

SEAGOON:

Thank you.

FX:

DRAGGING CHAINS, DOOR SHUTS

MORIARTY:

Here! Let me take your wet kilt.

FX:

MATERIAL RIPPING

SEAGOON:

Whoo! Thanks. Now, if I could just get me left leg over my...

MORIARTY:

Not now!

SEAGOON:

Oh.

MORIARTY:

First you must meet my partner.

SEAGOON:

The stranger pressed a button in his trousers. A bookcase swung back revealing a plastic mule rest. From it he took out a volume. Rapidly he turned to page nine. On it was a drawing of a door marked Scotland. He knocked.

FX:

KNOCKING ON DOOR

GRAMS:

BAGPIPE MUSIC

GRYTPYPE:

Otch, aye. Otch, aye.

SEAGOON:

Otch, aye.

GRYTPYPE:

Ahh, come in, gentlemen. Oh, here, Neddie, let me take your kilt.

FX:

MATERIAL RIPPING

SEAGOON:

Whoop! (CAMPILY) Thank you. My, it is draughty.

GRYTPYPE:

Have a bagpipe.

SEAGOON:

No, thanks, I'm religious. Now, I'll get my left leg under these...

GRAMS:

TIGER GROWLING

SEAGOON:

(GULPS) A tiger.

GRYTPYPE:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

Don't let it come near me!

GRYTPYPE:

Why not?

SEAGOON:

I've got flu.

GRYTPYPE:

Down, pussy. Put the little man down.

SEAGOON:

Why is that tiger wearing brown boots?

GRYTPYPE:

His black ones are at the menders. Here. Have a fresh kilt.

FX:

MATERIAL RIPPING

SEAGOON:

Whoop! Thank you. Now excuse me, I... I must get out of these chains.

GRYTPYPE:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

Errrr! Uurghhh! They can't hold me, Son of Houdini.

ORCHESTRA:

FLAT FANFARE AND CYMBAL CRASH

FX:

CHAINS

SEAGOON:

Right! Now, I'll just get my leg over my right shoulder... Urghh! Rotate my ankles in circles... Bend my head under my glasses... Burghhh! Space my arms round my waist, up my back, under my chin. At the same time, bend my legs up under the base of my skull... Eurghhh! Eurgghhh!There. (PUFFING)
How's that?

GRYTPYPE:

You silly twisted boy. Neddie? Stop playing that leather euphonium and answer me. Why are you keeping us prisoners here?

SEAGOON:

What?

GRYTPYPE:

A likely story.

SEAGOON:

It's the truth!

GRAMS:

TIGER GROWLING

SEAGOON:

Keep away from that tiger.

GRYTPYPE:

Why?

SEAGOON:

It's got flu! And no wonder in this weather. Just look at the snow out of the window.

GRYTPYPE:

Yes. It's a pity it's going to waste.

MORIARTY:

Do you realise, Seagoon, that the Sudanese have never seen snow?

GRYTPYPE:

Just think, Neddie. You could be the man to hold the first exhibition of British snow in Khartoum. You'd make a fortune.

SEAGOON:

Really? But I don't own any snow.

GRYTPYPE:

Moriarty, a bill of sale.

GRAMS:

WHOOSH

GRYTPYPE:

Sign there, would you, Neddie?

GRAMS:

SCRIBBLING ON PARCHMENT

GRYTPYPE:

There. That gives you possession of all the snow in England.

SEAGOON:

Hooray! I'll take it to the Sudan and make my fortune! But first...

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING

SEAGOON:

...I'll just get this left leg over here... And the right leg over... Earrrp!

GREENSLADE:

While Mr Seagoon is in the second day of his lightning escape act, we see, approaching the French coast, a celluloid lift containing a harmonica player with a ginger glass eye... Max Geldray!

MAX GELDRAI:

'CHERRY PINK AND APPLE BLOSSOM WHITE'

GREENSLADE:

The White Box of Great Bardfield, part two. And I'm surprised it's got this far.

SEAGOON:

Having spent all my life savings on buying all the snow in England, I realised that I had cornered the world market. Next, I contacted England's greatest and only snow packer.

FX:

HAMMERING STEEL NAILS IN. OVER:

CRUN:

Mnk, mnk, mnk... Ohhhhh... (REPEATED FOR SEVERAL SECONDS)

FX:

KNOCKING ON DOOR

MINNIE:

Ohhhhhh! We'll all be murdered in our beds.

CRUN:

It's alright, I can't get the wood you...

FX:

DOOR KNOB RATTLING, DOOR OPENING

SEAGOON:

Good morning.

CRUN:

You can't come in.

SEAGOON:

And why not?

CRUN:

Our tiger's got flu.

SEAGOON:

I don't wish to catch that.

CRUN:

Oh.

SEAGOON:

Mr Crun. I want to transport one hundred tons of snow to the Sudan.

CRUN:

Woah, ohhhh.

SEAGOON:

I understand that you are skilled in this dying craft.

CRUN:

Yes, yea mnk mnk... You can't get the wood, you know.

SEAGOON:

Can't you?

CRUN:

No, no, you can't get it at all. Do you know Molly Nasher?

SEAGOON:

No, why?

CRUN:

She can't get the wood either. You can't get it, you know, you... you...you... it...

MINNIE:

We'll all be murdered in our beds.

SEAGOON:

Yes, yes. Now, now, Mr Crun, please.

CRUN:

Yes?

SEAGOON:

Will you accept the task of transporting my snow to Khartoum?

CRUN:

Khartoum?

SEAGOON:

Yes.

CRUN:

Poor, poor, poor old Jim Tigernuts.

SEAGOON:

Jim Tigernuts? What about him?

CRUN:

He couldn't get the wood, either. He had to put 'em in cardboard boxes.

SEAGOON:

What was he?

CRUN:

An undertaker, you know.

SEAGOON:

I don't wish to know that.

FX:

DOOR OPENING

CRUN:

Ohhh.

MINNIE:

(SINGING) Yom pom piddle...

GRAMS:

TIGER GROWLING OVER:

MINNIE:

(SINGING) Yom pom piddle pee...

CRUN:

Minnie? Stop that modern, crazy rhythm singing. You... you... you sinful woman.

MINNIE:

Ahhh, you're a square buddy! You're corny!

CRUN:

Never you mind about who's corny, you put that tiger down.

MINNIE:

This... this tiger's not well, buddy. He's got flu.

CRUN:

Never you mind, buddy.

GRAMS:

TIGER GROWLING OVER:

MINNIE:

Ahh, Buddy.

CRUN:

Don't...

MINNIE:

You'll have us all murdered in our beds.

CRUN:

Why don't you want the wood, you know...?

BANNISTER AND CRUN:

(ARGUE AS TIGER GROWLS)

CRUN:

It's no good trying to tell me whether I'm old and square. I can get the... I... Hnk, mnk, mnk... ohhhh... Minnie? Minnie? Oh, dear. Where have you gone? Oh!

GRAMS:

TIGER GROWLING

CRUN:

Fido. Good... good tiger. Oh, dear, open your mouth. (ECHOEY) Min? Are you down there?

MINNIE:

(FAINTLY) Yes, I'm just going to bed.

CRUN:

(ECHOEY) Come out of there. Tigers aren't meant to be slept in you know. You mustn't... Come out at once, I'm...

SEAGOON:

Stop this madness...

CRUN:

Mnn, can't...

SEAGOON:

Mr Crun.

CRUN:

... get the wood you know...

SEAGOON:

I understand that. Mr Crun, I'm going down to the docks to commandeer a ship. I want all my snow boxed and crated and delivered to the quay tomorrow.

CRUN:

Poor tiger. He's got the flu, you know...

MINNIE:

We'll all be murdered in our tigers!

GREENSLADE:

Ladies and gentlemen. A word to listeners who may have been perplexed by the recurring appearance of a tiger with influenza. The RSPCA have asked me to point out that on no account would they permit the employment of a tiger in a poor state of health. The tiger appearing on this programme has not got flu but is just acting the part of a tiger with flu. Snow on high ground, rain in places. Part three, we join Seagoon at the docks.

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING

SEAGOON:

Hrghhhh! I'll just get my left elbow under the right armpit and I'll be... uhhh... I'll be free in a second.

GRAMS:

TIGER GROWLING

SEAGOON:

What's that? Who owns this tiger?

ECCLES:

Hallowwww!

SEAGOON:

I found myself looking into the face of a ragged idiot wearing a tin sou'wester, carrying a flannel anchor and leading a tiger.

ECCLES:

You know? He's got flu.

SEAGOON:

Wait! Why is that tiger wearing brown boots?

ECCLES:

His black ones are at the menders.

SEAGOON:

No, what I mean is why does a tiger wear boots?

ECCLES:

Well, it's lucky.

SEAGOON:

Why?

ECCLES:

What other tiger's got two pairs of boots to wear? Anyhow, he's got flu an'...

SEAGOON:

I don't wish to know that. Let me tell you, you're speaking to the Son of Howdini.

ORCHESTRA:

FLAT FANFARE AND CYMBAL CRASH

SEAGOON:

Thang yew! Now, long lad, tell me, where can I hire a ship to take me to Africa?

ECCLES:

Ahhhh. Where can you hire a ship to take you to Africa? Hm hmm. Yah. Well, let me see. There's umm... I know some fellas. I could... I could... I could... um... I got 'em all... um... I know these fellas, yup. Uhhmmmm... Let me see... Jim Cronger? Nope, no, not 'im, nope. He can't get the wood, you know, that fella. Uhhmm... Anudder fella... Ah, gee, there's... uhmm... Ahhh! Oooohhh! Oooohhh! Oooohh. Um, yeah! There's a fellow in Deptford... ah... no, no, not him, not him. This shouldn't be difficult, you know, it shouldn't be difficult. I... I got quite a few fellas and... ummm... now, let me think, now... ummm... ummmm... What was the question again?

SEAGOON:

You idiot, Eccles!

ECCLES:

You idiot, Eccles!

SEAGOON:

I want a ship and supplies.

ECCLES:

Su... oh, supplies? Ohh. How about milk?

SEAGOON:

Yes, I suppose I'll need some.

ECCLES:

Oh, good. 'Cos me and my partner are in the milk business.

SEAGOON:

Who's your partner?

ECCLES:

A cow! Har har har har!

FX:

PISTOL SHOT

GRAMS:

FUNERAL DIRGE

SEAGOON:

Alas, poor Eccles. I knew him well. Right! Now, has anyone here got a ship for hire?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Yes, I have! Enter Blunebottles. Sticks head through porthole, cops dirty big bosun's spanner on nut. Splun! Oh, I don't like this game.

SEAGOON:

Tell me more, little heavily pimpled stranger.

BLUEBOTTLE:

You want a ship? I have a ship. A proud ship. Thinks: I have a ship, a proud ship.

SEAGOON:

Where is it, little Nelson?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Here it is! Springs forward onto deck of proud ship. Springe!

FX:

THUMP

BLUEBOTTLE:

This is my rocket ship. See? I will demonstrate its power to you. I stand on the deck and light the rocket fuse, so!

GRAMS:

EXPLOSION, WHOOSH OF ROCKET

BLUEBOTTLE:

There it goes.

SEAGOON:

Why aren't you on it?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Because... Hmmm, the ship has gone. Thinks: Then what is Bluebottle standing on?

GRAMS:

SPLASH

BLUEBOTTLE:

Oyyyy! Help! I'm drowned in the deaded water. Look! All the silver paper's come off my cardboard cutlass. My best trousers is wetted. This means I'll have to wear Mum's old drawers while they dry. Heeheeheee! Exits left to hear Ray Ellington's Quinten.

RAY ELLINGTON QUARTET:

'SALLY'

GREENSLADE:

We come now to the great day when Ned Seagoon arrived at Port Sudan with the four hundred boxes for the first great exhibition of British snow in the Sudan. At the quayside, Major Dennis Bloodnok, conman and bar.

BLOODNOK:

All lies, do you hear me? All lies. I swear on my convict's uniform. Now, Neddie, you've... err... brought the snow?

SEAGOON:

Yes, a hundred tons.

BLOODNOK:

Bravo for the old country. What's its name again?

SEAGOON:

Fred!

BLOODNOK:

That's it. Long live Fred! Now, into this sack and I'll take you to the great exhibition hall.

GRAMS:

WHOOSH - WHOOSH

BLOODNOK:

Here we are.

OMNES:

AFRICAN CROWD NOISE

BLOODNOK:

Thank you, thank you, thank you. Yes. Now, ladies, gentlemen and wogs. Mr Ned Seagoon will now cut the ribbon on the first box of British snow.

OMNES:

EXCITED MUTTERINGS

BLOODNOK:

Abdul? Abdul. The scissors.

ABDUL:

[MILLIGAN]

I can't get the safe open, hooray.

BLOODNOK:

Safe? What are the scissors doing in the safe?

ABDUL:

Scissors are made of gold.

BLOODNOK:

Gold!

ABDUL:

Hooray.

BLOODNOK:

Uhk. Steady Dennis! (CLEARS THROAT) You can't get the safe open, you say? Well, let's see if old Dennis can do it, eh? Heheheheh, yes, now. Just put on me running shoes. Now, how wide's this safe? Three foot, eh? You wogs, there! Clear a lane three foot wide from here to the door. Now before I open the safe, so that no-one will know my secret methods, will you all close your eyes. Have you all done that? Splendid, splendid. Now... uh...

FX:

HEAVY OBJECT RUMBLING OVER FLOOR. PAUSE.

GRAMS:

DISTANT EXPLOSION

SEAGOON:

What's that? Good heavens, the...

BLOODNOK:

What's the matter, lad?

SEAGOON:

The safe's gone.

BLOODNOK:

Good heavens, can't I turn my back for the moment? Never mind, lad, it so happens that by the merest chance I have a pair of golden scissors on me. There, cut the ribbon.

SEAGOON:

Ladies and gentlemen. Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking...

BLOODNOK:

Here. Never mind that, cut the tape, go on.

SEAGOON:

I now pronounce the box of British snow open.

OMNES:

NATIVE MUTTERINGS

SEAGOON:

Oh, no! The snow's gone! The box is full of water!

BLOODNOK:

Ee, gad. The heat of the sun's melted it.

SEAGOON:

Who stole my snow and put water in its place, eh? I'm ruined! (SOBS)

BLOODNOK:

What? This water will sell for huge sums to tribesmen living in the Sahara Desert.

SEAGOON:

Oh? (PANTING) How can I get there?

BLOODNOK:

Quite simple. By the merest chance...

SEAGOON:

Yes?

BLOODNOK:

...I have outside a hundred camels and provisions for six weeks. They're yours for twenty pounds.

SEAGOON:

Right! There!

FX:

CASH REGISTER

BLOODNOK:

Thank you. Forward!

ORCHESTRA:

SUSPENSE, DESERT TYPE LINK

OMNES:

NATIVE MUTTERINGS

GRAMS:

CAMEL NOISES

ORCHESTRA:

SLOW RHYTHMIC BEATING OF BIG DRUM IN BACKGROUND UNDER:

SEAGOON:

January the 8th. Nearly there. Very, very excited. Expect to make a fortune selling my cardboard boxes of water to natives.

BLOODNOK:

Travelled all night to avoid sun.

ECCLES:

I travelled all day to avoid the moon.

GRYTPYPE:

I travelled by train to avoid Eccles.

SEAGOON:

I travelled by Eccles to avoid the train.

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING

SEAGOON:

...get my right fist under my leg. Urugggghhh. Stretch my...

ORCHESTRA:

DRUMS STOP

SEAGOON:

Sheikh a-leg, up the mud walled city of El Pong.

CHIEF PONG:

[ELLINGTON]

You come, my city Pongs. My People, all pong. Me, pong.

BLOODNOK:

Let me talk to him in his own language. Now! What's your language?

CHIEF PONG:

You watch yours, ladies present. Hey! You! You got water in cardboard box for tribe? We need-um water. Me, give you money. Here.

FX:

COINS CHINKING

SEAGOON:

Oh, thank you very much. Where can I keep it all?

BLOODNOK:

Lad! It just so happens I have here a replica of the safe that was stolen in the Sudan. I'll keep it for you.

FX:

COINS CHINKING

BLOODNOK:

Thank you, thank you. Oh! And now, so that no-one will learn the secret combination of the lock, will everybody please close their eyes while I unlock it? Are they closed? Right! Hup!

GRAMS:

SPEEDING UP FOOTSTEPS RUNNING AWAY INTO THE DISTANCE

SEAGOON:

I never saw him again.

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING

SEAGOON:

Now, I'll just get my left leg over my elbow...

CHIEF PONG:

Me no wish to know that!

SEAGOON:

Uiee.

CHIEF PONG:

Show-um water. Pong people need-um water.

SEAGOON:

Yes. Right! I'll just open this cardboard box.

FX:

CARDBOARD RIPPING

CHIEF PONG:

Cardboard box empty, cor blimey! Only steam!

MORIARTY:

Curse! Curses! It's evaporated.

SEAGOON:

Moriarty!?

MORIARTY:

Yes?

SEAGOON:

I'm ruined again! Will no-one help me? The Sheikh will kill me!

GRAMS:

WHOOSH

GRYTPYPE:

Don't worry, Neddie. I can come to an amicable agreement with him.

SEAGOON:

Oh, good.

GRYTPYPE:

Oh, Sheikh?

CHIEF PONG:

Yeah?

FX:

GUNSHOT

GRYTPYPE:

Just a shallow hole, Moriarty. Ah, Neddie, I know a place where they'll pay anything for old cardboard boxes.

SEAGOON:

Where?

GRYTPYPE:

England.

SEAGOON:

What do they want them for?

GRYTPYPE:

Well, you see the idea is they... they pack snow into them and ship them to the Sudan...

SEAGOON:

No!

GRYTPYPE:

...where the natives have never seen...

SEAGOON:

No! No, leave me alone. Leave me alone...

GRYTPYPE:

... because it's there...

SEAGOON:

(GOING OFF) If I could just get my left leg under my right arm and then stretch...

FX:

CHAINS RATTLING

ORCHESTRA:

PLAY OUTRO THEME

GREENSLADE:

That was the Goon Show. A recorded program featuring Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and Spike Milligan. With the Ray Ellington Quartet and Max Geldray. The orchestra was conducted by Wally Stott. Script by Spike Milligan and Eric Sykes. Announcer Wallace Greenslade, the programme produced by Peter Eton

Notes:

Great Bardfield is a town in Essex, UK.

Kenneth Adam was Controller of the BBC Light Programme (1950-55), one of the BBC's most popular national radio stations.

Houdini was a world famous escapologist.