

S7 E12 - The Flea

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GREENSLADE:

This is the BBC Light Programme. Ladies and gentlemen, The Goon Show.

FX:

LOTS OF SELLERS-TYPE PIANO MUSIC

SEAGOON:

Gad! Didn't that music do something to you, Wallace?

GREENSLADE:

No, but I'd like to do something to that music.

SEAGOON:

What? You realise, of course, you're talking of Peter Sellers, the world's greatest outdoor pianist? Did you hear that build up I gave you, Mr. Sellers?

SELLERS:

(VROOM-BRRRRRRR-TYPE CAR NOISE)

SEAGOON:

(OVER) I say... Don't tell me you're down to *that* in motorcars?

SELLERS:

No, I've just ordered a new Super-Spon Reversal Senna-pod twelve horse power convertible. I was only making that noise until it arrived. Then it can do it for me. (BRRRRRR CAR-TYPE NOISE)

SEAGOON:

(OVER) How jolly for you, Fred Sellers.

SELLERS:

Hup!

SEAGOON:

Thank you. Now, if you'll kindly stop sticking pins in that clay model of Lew Grade, we'll persuood (STUMBLES) to the hern hern and the hern. This week the play is entitled...

FX:

GREAT BUILD UP FANFARE

SEAGOON:

I've forgotten what it was, now. (GIGGLES)

GREENSLADE:

Allow me...

MILLIGAN:

(OFF, OVER) Al-ow ow ow...

GREENSLADE:

...allow me, you silly little nit.

MILLIGAN:

(OFF, GARBLED)

SECOMBE:

(OFF) What? (HYSTERICAL LAUGH)

GREENSLADE:

We present... We present The Flea. (DRAMATIC MUSSORGSKY-TYPE SINGING) Ah, ha, ha, The Flea.
Ah,ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha, ha ha ha ha ha, The Flea.

SEAGOON:

(RASPBERRY)

FX:

MUSIC

GREENSLADE:

The year, 1665. 1665? Good heavens, I must hurry! I'll miss my bus!

FX:

QUILL AND PARCHMENT NOISES

SEAGOON:

(WRITING) December, 1665. Did rise, betimes. Finding much snow without, did put on my belly binder and warm knees. Sported thereafter with Mrs. Fitzsimmons and did high me later to Ward's coffee house to break my fast.

FX:

FANFARE

OMNES:

(MURMUR)

DAISY:

[SELLERS]

(CAMP) Oh, good morrow, Master Pepys. Cappuccino?

SEAGOON:

No. Just coffee, Daisy.

DAISY:

Black or white?

SEAGOON:

White, with a dash of milk.

DAISY:

Oh, ho-ho! You tease!

SEAGOON:

Now, with whom can I make gossip, this chilly morn? I see nobody, though, and nobody sees me. What a coincident, egad, spon, to be sure, hern hern, hi diddle dee, needle nardle noo, splin splan splon, ying tong iddle-i-po. And remember, you've got to go owwwwwww!

GRYTPYPE:

How very interesting that was.

SEAGOON:

I'm sorry, I didn't see you standing in that coffee pot.

GRYTPYPE:

I know, we had the lid down.

SEAGOON:

We? Where's your friend?

GRYTPYPE:

He's up the spout.

MORIARTY:

Owwwwwww. You got to go owwwwwww!

SEAGOON:

[UNCLEAR]. He's just been owwwwwed.

FX:

FANFARE

GELDRAVY:

Hi!

GRYTPYPE:

Sir, you will excuse this steaming Gaul. He is, er, given to short temper as he has no lodgings for the night.

SEAGOON:

Oh! I can't see a French Count sleeping in the street.

MORIARTY:

Of course not, I've got up now! Owwwwwww, owwww, oww.

GRYTPYPE:

He's just been oww again!

SEAGOON:

I should like to accomodate you for the night, but...

MORIARTY:

We accept!

GRYTPYPE:

I second that! Moriarty, go and pack the jam tins.

MORIARTY:

I am gonna go an' go an' erm... owwwwwoooowwoowwo...

FX:

QUILL AND PARCHMENT NOISES

SEAGOON:

(WRITING) Did return home with the two gentlemen. Did not sport with Mrs. Fitzsimmons owing to the cold weather and the presence of the French Count and his manager who occupied my second best bed.

GRYTPYPE:

You... you heard that nice gentleman, Moriarty, put on your second best pyjamas.

MORIARTY:

Owwwww...

GRYTPYPE:

There he goes again. He never thinks of anything else, these days. By the way, Moriarty, did you notice the brass name plate on our host's door?

MORIARTY:

Yes! I've got it here!

GRYTPYPE:

Hmm, you clever... you clever little vandal, you! You see what it says: "Samuel Pepys, Secretary to the Navy". We couldn't have picked a better Charlie for our plan.

MORIARTY:

Hoiooioioiooooo! Owwwoooooow. Saprستي nadgers! If it works, we'll get rich beyond the dreams of Olwen! Oheoooo! The money! The moolah! The grisby! Owwwwwyee. Owww owww owww owww.

GRYTPYPE:

He's gonna have one of his turns again.

SEAGOON:

Is he?

GRYTPYPE:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

I'd better go, then.

FX:

DOOR SHUTS

MORIARTY:

He's gone!

GRYTPYPE:

Yes. Now, where's François, the flea?

MORIARTY:

François, the flea, is inside my sock. He likes to travel on foot! Hoihoihoihoioooooo! Hoi!

GRYTPYPE:

Now, Moriarty, are you sure this flea is reliable?

MORIARTY:

Reliable? Mon rippers! This flea has bitten all the crown heads of Europe - and sometimes lower than that!

GRYTPYPE:

You mean that this flea has royal blood?

MORIARTY:

Oouiiii, oouiiii.

GRYTPYPE:

In that case he might be fussy. We shall have to blindfold him. He must never know who he's biting. Let's have a look at him.

MORIARTY:

I'll just unchain him. Voyla!

GRYTPYPE:

Mmm! Let's see him jump.

MORIARTY:

Right! François, hup!

FX:

BOING BOING BOING BOING BOING

MORIARTY:

(OVER) Steady, steady. Save your energy, boy. Save it! Steady, steady. Whooooaa.

GRYTPYPE:

I see he favours the western role. Now, action, Moriarty! Chain him to your nightshirt.

MORIARTY:

Right!

FX:

CHAINS

MORIARTY:

(OVER) Ahh, ah, ow!

GRYTPYPE:

Now, during the night, on a given signal, François will bite you...

MORIARTY:

Owww. I'm too young!

GRYTPYPE:

Moriarty, the reward will be great! You'll be able to retire François to stud on a dog of his own. He'll be able to go...

MORIARTY:

Oooww, oww.

GRYTPYPE:

Thank you. Now, off you go to ninny-byes while I strum Max Geldray.

MORIARTY:

(OVER MAX) Oooww, Max Geldray...

MAX GELDRAY:

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

MORIARTY:

Thank you. And now: (YOWLS IN PAIN) Ooooiohohooo!

FX:

DOOR OPENING

MORIARTY:

(OVER) My pectorals!

SEAGOON:

What ails... What ails my many screaming guests?

GRYTPYPE:

Mr. Pepys! The Count Jim "Thighs" Moriarty has been bitten by one of your English fleas.

MORIARTY:

Yes! This means war!

SEAGOON:

A physic on you! There are no fleas in my house.

GRYTPYPE:

No? Moriarty, bend down and show the gentleman the bites.

SEAGOON:

Nonsense! This bedding is flea free. It's burnt twice a day!

GRYTPYPE:

Oh! Then what's this on the sheets?

SEAGOON:

Let me see... (READING) Siberian Railways.

MORIARTY:

Proof positive! No wonder there's fleas.

GRYTPYPE:

Master Pepys, I must warn you. Anything you take down will be up-rooted, replanted in Trafalgar Square and used in evidence against you.

FX:

TA-DAAAAA

GELDRAÏ:

Hi!

FX:

QUILL AND PARCHMENT NOISES

SEAGOON:

(WRITING) Fifth of December. Did sport with Mrs Fitsimmonds and then to the law courts.

FX:

ORCHESTRA TUNING UP, FOLLOWED BY A GAVEL

ELLINGTON:

Silence! Silence in court. Silence. The court will now rise for the Lord Chief Justice, Jim Spriggs.

OMNES:

(MOANS) Er, Rhubarb! Rhubarb rhubarb.

SPRIGGS:

Please, be seated, please. The case is come to Jim "Thighs" Moriarty, minister without underpants, versus the British Crown, *with* underpants. Will the plaintiff open the case?

PLAINTIFF:

[GREENSLADE]

(FRENCH ACCENT) My lord, we claim damages of forty thousand golden crowns for the savage attack by an English flea residing under the roof of Mr. Samuel Pepys, Secretary to the Navy.

SPRIGGS:

Ahhh. Well acted! Now then, what is a Navy?

SEAGOON:

(SHOUTING) A Navy, my lord, is an army entirely surrounded by water!

SPRIGGS:

Silence! Silence, please, or I'll have the court cleared.

SEAGOON:

(RASPBERRY)

SPRIGGS:

Thank you, very much. Now then, what makes you think the British Crown should pay for this... Flea bite?

GRYTPYPE:

It was a British flea, my lord.

SEAGOON:

(SHOUTING AGAIN) My lord! I object! I move that the flea's nationality be proven before this case proceeds!

SPRIGGS:

Agreed! Call the flea!

ELLINGTON:

The flea!

MILLIGAN:

(OFF) The flea!

SELLERS:

(OFF) The flea!

FX:

HORSE GALLOPING TOWARD US

WILLIUM:

(OVER, AS HORSE SLOWS TO A STOP) Wooooa, wooa, mate. Woooo-ooh-oh.

SPRIGGS:

Great Jupiter, mate. Is that thing a flea?

WILLIUM:

No, it's an 'orse, mate.

SPRIGGS:

A horse?

WILLIUM:

Yes.

SPRIGGS:

Take his hat off.

WILLIUM:

There.

SPRIGGS:

You're right, it is a horse. Where... where's the flea?

WILLIUM:

He's on the 'orse, mate. I thought he'd get here quicker that way, you see.

SPRIGGS:

I see. Now then, as he's not riding side saddle I presume he's a male flea...

WILLIUM:

Yeah, yes.

SPRIGGS:

Ah, ha. Will the flea... will the flea raise his right leg and swear to tell the truth.

FX:

BOING BOING

SPRIGGS:

Thank you. Thank you, thank you. Now, Mr. Pepys, will you please take the... the flea in the palm of your right hand and see if you can identify him.

SEAGOON:

(STILL SHOUTING) My lord! I can honestly say, I have never seen this flea before in my life! I claim that he is a foreigner!

OMNES:

(MOANS) Rhubarb, rhubarb. Rhubarb, rhubarb. Rhubarb, rhubarb. Rhubarb, rhubarb.

MORIARTY:

Grytpype, suppose they discover François is French?

GRYTPYPE:

Impossible! I destroyed his passport, I tell you.

SPRIGGS:

Silence! It is the opinion of this court that the flea will re... will remain in custody while a description of him is circulated to Interpol.

GREENSLADE:

Dear listeners, I spring forward at this moment to mention to those of you who have not been in jug on the Continent that Interpol is an international organisation of policemen. I do hope you find these little snippets of information helpful. If they are, then my job has been well worthwhile.

FX:

FANFARE

MILLIGAN:

(OFF) Continue, please...

GREENSLADE:

(OVER) And now, The Flea, part two. In which Moriarty and Grytpype high them to a flea circus with a plan.

MINNIE:

Roll up!

CRUN:

Roll up!

MINNIE:

Roll up!

CRUN:

See the greatest flea circus on earth...

MINNIE:

Every one hand picked, buddy!

CRUN:

Come and see War and Peace done by a cast of fleas.

MINNIE:

Roll up.

CRUN:

Flea dialogue with human subtitles.

MINNIE:

Roll up.

CRUN:

Roll up.

MINNIE:

Roll up, you people.

GRYTPYPE:

Did you hear that Moriarty? A flea circus.

MORIARTY:

Yes, let's go and buy one quickly.

GRYTPYPE:

Buy one? What do you think I've brought this dog along for?

MORIARTY:

Explain to me and the listeners.

GRYTPYPE:

We're going to look for a British flea with exactly the same markings as François.

MORIARTY:

And then we change them over.

GRYTPYPE:

There goes the plot, listeners. Come, let's go and recon.

FX:

DRUM ROLL

CRUN:

Ladies and gentlemen, the hero of tonight's performance of War and Peace is the wonder flea, star of knee, thigh and chest, who has just returned from a highly successful tour of Mrs. Fitzsimmons. Here he is, Little Jim!

FX:

DOGS BARKING, BOING BOING BOING BOING BOING BOING

GRYTPYPE:

Moriarty, hand me those lorgnettes. What luck! Little Jim is the living image of François, even to the scar on his chin.

MORIARTY:

What now?

GRYTPYPE:

After the performance we take this shaggy dog backstage. No flea could resist a ride on a dog like this.

MORIARTY:

You're right...

GREENSLADE:

(OVER) Er, excuse me, please. Excuse me, just a moment. Excuse me, please.

GRYTPYPE:

What?

GREENSLADE:

Ladies and gentlemen, at this stage the BBC are concerned about the possibility of this show causing listeners some, erm, irritation. I should like to state, therefore, that there are no real fleas taking part in this programme. The parts of all the fleas are taken by small grasshoppers, painted black.

SECOMBE:

Have you done?

GREENSLADE:

Yes.

SECOMBE:

Thank you.

SEAGOON:

December the sixth.

FX:

QUILL AND PARCHMENT

SEAGOON:

(WRITING) Did sport with Mrs. Fitzsimmons.

MILLIGAN:

Owwwwww...

SEAGOON:

And, being suspicious of Grytpype Thynne, I did place two stalwart guards outside the accused flea's cell in Newgate Prison.

FX:

FOOTSTEPS AND JANGLING KEYS. BOING, BOING, BOING

BLUEBOTTLE:

Have you ever guarded a flea before, Eccles?

ECCLES:

No. This is the first big job I had. Just a minute... (OFF) Hoi!

FX:

BOING

ECCLES:

That made him jump! Did you hear that? Doing! That's him, when he goes... Doing! He goes... he goes doing! Doing, he goes that all the time. He goes the lum...

BLUEBOTTLE:

You're a naughty, cruel thing, Eccles. You should not do that! You may have fleas of your own one day.

ECCLES:

Oohhh, I'm... I'm sorry Bottle.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Lance Corporal Bottle, to you!

ECCLES:

Sorry, Lance Corporal Bottle to you.

BLUEBOTTLE:

I should jollyd well think so, too! Stand... Stand to cardboard attention!

ECCLES:

Owwwowowow.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Chin up! Chest in!

ECCLES:

But it hurts!

BLUEBOTTLE:

Thinks: I will teach this naughty man a lesson. Eccles?

ECCLES:

Yeah?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Raise right leg!

ECCLES:

OK.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Now, raise left leg.

ECCLES:

Right. (SILENT PAUSE)

BLUEBOTTLE:

Ohhhh! How is it that you got three legs, Eccles?

ECCLES:

'Cause the forth one fell off. (SHORT PAUSE) Oww, oow... (GIGGLES)

BLUEBOTTLE:

(GIGGLES)

ECCLES:

Wait a minute, wait a minute. What are you laughing at?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Well I don't like to be left behind.

ECCLES:

Well, well.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Well, we've given them enough Terrance Rattigan-type dialogue. It's time to exercise our flea-type prisoner. Private Eccles, open flea pit!

FX:

CREAK OF FLEA PIT HINGES

ECCLES:

(OVER) Oohh! Here, do you think it's safe to take his leg shackles off?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Do not worry, Eccles. I will keep him covered with this flea powder.

ECCLES:

Oh, dear. OK, well, I'll... I'll run the flea round the yard on his lead.

FX:

BOING, BOING, BOING, BOING, BOING

ECCLES:

(OVER) Oh, oh! Steady! Wooo. Wooo, stop, please. Wooo, steady, steady now. Woa, woa. Woa, woa.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Eeoeah! Eccles, don't let him come near me! I don't want to be bited. I'm an East Finchley-type boy and... there are no fleas in East Finchley. Flealess Fincherly, they call it! Eeehehe! I don't like this game! I'm all itchy-coo!

GREENSLADE:

Er, listeners, we should like to reassure you once again that at no stage in this drama do genuine fleas take part. Before commencing it, all actors were searched by John Snagge. To allow you to relax here is Ray Ellington and his DDT quartet.

RAY ELLINGTON QUARTET:

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

ORCHESTRA:

1812 OVERTURE

SEAGOON:

1812? And in 1665! Ahahaha! So much for humour. Well, now.

FX:

QUILL AND PARCHMENT

SEAGOON:

(WRITING) December the splon. Did sport with Mrs Fitzsimmons. Haa-mm. Suddenly...

FX:

DOOR OPENING

BLUEBOTTLE:

(PANICKY) Captain, Mr. Pepys, sir...! (POLITELY) Hello, Mrs. Fitzsimmons. (PANICKY AGAIN) Captain, two men crept up on us from behind and overpowered us with a quarter of Pontefract cakes.

SEAGOON:

They nearly had you on the run!

BLUEBOTTLE:

Yes! Then, thinking that I... that... em... Thinking that they had made us unconcious with the dredded Prontelfracts, they switched fleas and made off with our one! (POLITELY AGAIN) Hello, Mrs. Fitzsimmons.

SEAGOON:

So! Moriarty's flea *was* a forigener! We must stop it leaving the country or the crown will lose the case. To the military!

BLUEBOTTLE:

(ENTHUSIASTIC) To the Millingtree! (AGAIN POLITELY) Good-bye, Mrs. Fitzsimmons.

ORCHESTRA:

BLOODNOK THEME

BLOODNOK:

Oooooohooooooo! Ohhohooo! Ohhh! Oh, you caught me out then, lads, you did!

FX:

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

BLOODNOK:

Oohohhoo! Out the back, Mrs. Fitzsimmons, dear. Ohoho! (OFF) Come in!

FX:

DOOR OPENING

SEAGOON:

Ah, Major Bloodnok.

BLOODNOK:

Ohohoho! Oho!

SEAGOON:

Helllloo, Mrs. Fitzsimmons! (TO BLOODNOK) Any signs of these men, with the fugitive flea?

BLOODNOK:

No, no, no.

SEAGOON:

It's not good enough, Major!

BLOODNOK:

What?

SEAGOON:

Are your men reliable?

BLOODNOK:

Myuk!? My men reliable? My...? Captain Caruthers. Tell him.

CARUTHERS:

[MILLIGAN]

Ahhh... well... er... they are... er... eraahhh... men, sir. Ahhh... you see, er... well... aaaaahhhhhh, I... I... I... I suppose they arrrrrhhhh. Well, um... you... ahhhhhhhhhhhahhhhhhhhhh...

BLOODNOK:

Well, Seagoon. Does *that* answer your question?

SEAGOON:

I can't remember what the question was.

CARUTHERS:

Neither can I!

SEAGOON:

Thank you.

BLOODNOK:

Thank you.

SEAGOON:

Excuse me a moment, Major!

FX:

DOOR OPENING

CARUTHERS:

What? Yeahhhhh...

FX:

DOOR CLOSING, FOLLOWED BY QUILL AND PARCHMENT

SEAGOON:

(WRITING) I retired to adjacent room, where I did briefly sport with Mrs. Fitzsimmons.

FX:

DOOR OPENING/CLOSING

CARUTHERS:

(OVER AND OFF) Oh, not again!

SEAGOON:

Ahemm. Well now, Major Bloodnok. We suspect that the, er, foreign flea might be an exact replica of the flea I've got in this horse box.

BLOODNOK:

Oooh! What cunninnng.

McGREGOR:

[ELLINGTON]

(OFF) Er, excuse me, Major. A company of my highlanders have caught two men trying to slip past on a banana skin.

BLOODNOK:

Bring them in, McGregor!

SEAGOON:

How did *he* get in a Scottish regiment?

BLOODNOK:

He lied about his age.

McGREGOR:

Come on! Come on, you two, there! Come on! Come on, get in here, you two. Come on.

MORIARTY AND GRYTPYPE:

(MOANS OF RESENTMENT)

GRYTPYPE:

Stop pushing us! Don't push.

McGREGOR:

Come on!

MORIARTY:

Ahhh!

GRYTPYPE:

Steaming nit!

McGREGOR:

Get up.

MORIARTY:

Take your filthy hand of my filthy neck.

McGREGOR:

Make one false step and I'll report you to Victor Sylvester.

MORIARTY:

Oowwww.

SEAGOON:

That's him! I recognise him by his...

MORIARTY:

Oow!

SEAGOON:

Now. Where's that French flea?

GRYTPYPE:

Outside on a sheepdog.

FX:

DOOR OPENING, DOGS BARKING

SEAGOON:

Ahhhh! Forty long haired sheepdogs! Which one is he on?

BLOODNOK:

I'll soon find him – in a military way! Dogs, from the right, number!

OMNES:

WOOFs OF VARIOUS TYPES UNTIL... HOWWWWL!

BLOODNOK:

That's the one, that's the one! Search him!

FX:

BOING

BLOODNOK:

Ohh, ahhh! Now, into the dustbin with him.

FX:

CLANG

BLOODNOK:

Ha! Got him!

MORIARTY:

They've got the flea in there!

SEAGOON:

We've got him there! Well, Grytpype, ahahahaha, this is the end of your nefarious career!

MORIARTY:

Ooowww!

GRYTPYPE:

Yes and yours!

SEAGOON:

(RISING IN PITCH) What? (LOW PITCHED) What do you mean?

GRYTPYPE:

Mr. Pepys, we've found a diary. Let me read you a sample extract. (READING) December the third. Whilst the King was away, did sport madly with Nell Gwyn.

SEAGOON:

(SWALLOWS) Oh, come, chaps, you're joking! Hahaha-nelly! Let's forget everything, eh? L-l-l-l-l-l-lets go owwwww, together! Ahahaha!

MORIARTY:

Yes. For one thousand pounds.

SEAGOON:

Oooooooooooooooooowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!

GRYTPYPE:

He's just been oooooooooowwwwwww'd.

MORIARTY:

One thousand ponds...

FX:

CLOSING MUSIC

SEAGOON:

(OVER) Oooooooooooooooooowwwwwwwwwwwww!

GREENSLADE:

That was the Goon Show, a BBC recorded programme, featuring Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and Spike Milligan. With the Ray Ellington Quartet, Max Geldray and the orchestra conducted by Wally Stott. Script by Spike Milligan and Larry Stevens. Announcer Wallace Greenslade. The program produced by Pat Dixon.

NOTES:

Samuel Pepys (pronounced "peeps") was a real historical figure, with a real historical diary, which is well-known for some real historical reason. In addition to having been Secretary of the Navy, he's known as the publisher of Sir Isaac Newton's "Principia Mathematica" (1666), the book which founded modern science. Also, Nell Gwyn was an actual mistress of Charles II, the king at the time.

When Moriarty says "we'll get rich beyond the dreams of Olwen", this is a reference to the late 1940s film, "Dream of Olwen". It also went under the title "While I live".

Lorgnettes are a pair of eyeglasses or opera glasses with a short handle.