

THE GOON SHOW:  
THE FLEA

First broadcast on December 20, 1956. Script by Spike Milligan and Larry Stephens. Produced by Pat Dixon. Announced by Wallace Greenslade. Orchestra conducted by Wally Stott. Transcribed by Christopher P. Thomas.

*Note: 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. End of lesson.*

Greenslade:

This is the BBC. 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:

*[Brrrrrr-up]* Hup!

Seagoon:

Thank you. 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*.

Milligan:

*[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, sixteen sixty-five. Sixteen sixty-five? Good heavens, I must hurry! I'll miss my bus!

FX:

*[quill and parchment noises]*

Seagoon:

*[writing] [garbled]* 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:

*[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 hoho! 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 ton iddle-i-po. And remember, you've got to go owwww!

Grytpype-Thynne:

How very interesting that was.

Seagoon:

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

Grytpype-Thynne:

I know, we had the lid down.

Seagoon:

We? Where's your friend?

Grytpype-Thynne:

He's up the spout.

Moriarty:

Owwwwww. You got to go owwwww!

Seagoon:

*[garbled]* He's just been owwwwwed.

Grytpype-Thynne:

Yes, it's all the rage! Now, erm, have these two seats been taken?

Seagoon:

No, there still here! Hahahaha! Ahahaha. Ahaha. Ahahaha. Ahaha. Ha-ahem.

Grytpype-Thynne:

A Charlie!

Seagoon:

What-what-what-what-what-what-what-what-what-what-what-what-what-what-what? Bwark! What-what-what? Bwark! *[chicken noises]*

Grytpype-Thynne:

I was only...

Seagoon:

Bwark!

Grytpype-Thynne:

...nearly saying that the other day! This is my friend, Count Jim "Thighs" Moriarty.

Moriarty:

Oww.

Seagoon:

A German diplomat is always welcome in England.

Moriarty:

What? Sapristi knockles! Hairy insult! You insult me, a Frenchman! We must fight a duel.

FX:

*[bang bang]*

Moriarty:

Honour is satisfied!

Seagoon:

And so am I!

Moriarty:

Tah dah.

FX:

*[fanfare]*

Moriarty:

Hoy!

Grytpype-Thynne:

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! Owwww owwww oww.

Grytpype-Thynne:

He's just been oww again!

Seagoon:

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

Moriarty:

We accept!

Grytpype-Thynne:

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

Moriarty:

Owwwa'm gonna go an' go an' erm owwwwooooowwoowwo...

FX:

*[quill and parchement noises]*

Seagoon:

*[writing]* Did return home with the two gentlemen. Did not sport with Mrs. Fitzsimmons owing to the cold weather and the presence French Count and his manager, who occupied my second best bed.

Grytpype-Thynne:

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

Moriarty:

Owwwww...

Grytpype-Thynne:

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-Thynne:

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:

Hoioioioiooooo! Owwoooooow. Saprستي nadgers! If it works, we'll get rich beyond the dreams of Alwin! [?]

Grytpype-Thynne:

Now, where's François, the flea?

Moriarty:

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

Grytpype-Thynne:

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-Thynne:

You mean that this flea has royal blood?

Moriarty:

Oouiiii, ouiiii.

Grytpype-Thynne:

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. Whala!

Grytpype-Thynne:

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. Whooooa.

Grytpype-Thynne:

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-Thynne:

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

Moriarty:

I'm too young!

Grytpype-Thynne:

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-Thynne:

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

Moriarty:

*[over Max]* Oooww, Max Geldray...

Max Geldray and Orchestra:

*[Musical interlude]*

Moriarty:

Thank you. And now: *[yowls in pain]* Oooooiohohooo!

FX:

*[door opening]*

Moriarty:

*[over]* My pectorals!

Seagoon:

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

Grytpype-Thynne:

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

Moriarty:

Yes! This means war!

Seagoon:

There are no fleas in my house.

Grytpype-Thynne:

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

Seagoon:

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

Grytpype-Thynne:

Oh! Then what's this on the sheets?

Seagoon:

Let me see... *[reading]* Siberian Railways.

Moriarty:

Proof positive! No wonder there's fleas.

Grytpype-Thynne:

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:

*[fanfare]*

Moriarty:

Hoi!

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, please sit *[garbled]*. The case is come to Jim "Thighs" Moriarty, minister without underpants, versus the British Crown, *with* underpants. Will the plaintiff open the case?

French Type Person (Greenslade):

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-Thynne:

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]*

William:

*[over, as horse slows to a stop]* Woouoa, woa mate. Wooua-ooh-oh.

Spriggs:

Great Jupiter! Mate. Is that thing a flea?

William:

No, it's an 'orse, mate.

Spriggs:

A horse?

William:

Yes.

Spriggs:

Take his hat off.

William:

There.

Spriggs:

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

William:

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...

William:

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-Thynne:

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.

Crun:

See the greatest flea circus on earth... Come and see *War and Peace* done by a cast of fleas... Flea dialogue with human subtitles.

Grytpype-Thynne:

Did you hear that Moriarty, flea circus.

Moriarty:

Yes, let's go and buy one quickly.

Grytpype-Thynne:

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

Moriarty:

Explain to me and listeners.

Grytpype-Thynne:

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

Moriarty:

And then we change them over.

Grytpype-Thynne:

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-Thynne:

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

Moriarty:

What now?

Grytpype-Thynne:

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. 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:

Owww...

Seagoon:

...And, being suspicious of Grytpype Thinne, I did place two stalwart guards outside the accused fleas cell in Newgate Prison.

FX:

*[footsteps and jangling keys]*

FX:

*[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? *[garbled]* Doing! That's him, when he go... Doing! He go, he go doing! Doing, he do that all the time. He does 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. [...] Oww, oow... [giggles]

Bluebottle:

[giggles]

Eccles:

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

Bluebottle:

I just don't like being left behind.

Bluebottle:

Well, we've given them enough Terrance Rattigan-type dialogue. It's time to exercise our flea-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, er, 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 Snag [?]. To allow you to relax, here is Ray Ellington, and his DDT quartet.

Milligan:

[Over Ray] [garbled] Ho!

Ray Ellington and Orchestra:

[Musical interlude]

FX:

[Music: 1812 overture]

Seagoon:

Eighteen twelve? And in sixteen sixty-five! 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 loose the case. To the military!

Bluebottle:

*[Enthusiastic]* To the Millingtree! *[again politely]* Good-bye, Mrs. Fitzsimmons.

FX:

*[Fanfare]*

Bloodnok:

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

FX:

*[Knock, knock, knock, knock, knock, knock, knock, knock]*

Bloodnok:

Ooohohhoo! Out the back, Mrs. Fitzsimmons, dear. Ohoho! *[off]* Come in!

FX:

*[door opening]*

Seagoon:

Now, Major Bloodnok.

Bloodnok:

Ohohoho! Oho!

Seagoon:

*[to Mrs. F.]* Hellooo, 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:

Ahhh, well, er, they are, er, eraahhh, men sir, arr, well, you see, er, well, aaaaahhhhhh, I-  
[giggles], I, I, I suppose they arrrrrrhhhh, well um, you, ahhhhhhhhhhahhhhhhhhhhh...

Bloodnok:

Well, Seagoon, does that answer your question?

Seagoon:

I can't remember the question...

Caruthers:

Neither can I!

Seagoon:

Thank you.

Bloodnok:

Thank you.

Seagoon:

Excuse me a moment, Major!

FX:

*[door opening.]*

Bloodnok:

What?

Caruthers:

Yeahhhhh...

FX:

*[door closing, followed by quill and parchment]*

Seagoon:

*[writing]* I retired to adjacent room, with a 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, forigen flea might be an exact replica of the flea I've got in this horse box.

Bloodnok:

Oooh! What cunning-ge...

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.

Ellington:

Come on! Come on you two, there! Come on! Come on get in here angels [?]. Come on.

Moriarty and Grytpype:

*[moans of resentment]*

Grytpype-Thynne:

Stop pushing us! Don't push.

Ellington:

Come on!

Moriarty:

Ahhh!

Grytpype-Thynne:

Steaming nit!

Ellington:

Get up.

Moriarty:

Take your filthy hand of my filthy neck.

Ellington:

Make one false step and I'll report you to *[garbled]*

Seagoon:

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

Moriarty:

Oow!

Seagoon:

Now. Where's that French flea?

Grytpype-Thynne:

Outside on a sheepdog.

FX:

*[door opening, dogs barking]*

Seagoon:

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





Moriarty:

One thousand poinds...

FX:

*[Closing music]*

Seagoon:

*[Over]* Oooooooooooooowwwwwwwwwww!

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.

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