

THE GOON SHOW:
THE GREENSLADE STORY

First broadcast on December 20, 1955. Script by Spike Milligan. Transcribed by Debby Stark, corrections by Kurt Adkins and Peter Olausson.

Greenslade:

This is the BBC Light program.

FX:

[Door opens with wind gust, wild applause]

Greenslade:

Encore? Certainly. *[Clears throat]* This is the BBC Light program.

FX:

[Wild applause]

Seagoon:

Hear that applause, dear listener? It was not for Danny Kaye, nor for Fred Lane. No. It was all for a common or garden BBC announcer, Wallace Greenslade. How did he come by this rapturous applause? It is with heavy heart and light kidneys that we tell you...

Greenslade:

The Greenslade Story or...

Sellers:

Winds Light to Variable

FX:

[Mystery music]

Snagge:

My name is Snagge, John Snagge. *[Two piano notes]* Thank you. It was June, 19-quifty-qua that the lad, Wallace Greenslade, first came to the BBC seeking refuge from hard work.

FX:

[Typewriter (i.e., reception office setting)]

Greenslade:

Good morning, Miss, I'm Mr. W. Greenslade.

Receptionist:

Oh, yes, you've come for the vacant post of announcer.

Greenslade:

Yes, I have.

Receptionist:

Do take a seat with the other applicants.

Greenslade:

Thank you. – I sat down next to a man wearing a brass deerstalker, white cricket boots, and a shredded cardboard wig.

Eccles:

Ha-low!

Greenslade:

Good morning.

Eccles:

Winds light to variable.

Greenslade:

Pardon?

Eccles:

I said, "Winds light to variable."

Greenslade:

Oh, really.

Eccles:

Yeah. Winds light to variable. I'm practicing, you know.

Greenslade:

Don't tell me you're applying for the post of announcer?

Eccles:

Oh, yeah! And I'll get it, too, you'll see! I'm wearing a Cambridge tie!

Greenslade:

You? You were at Cambridge?

Eccles:

Yeah!

Greenslade:

What were you doing there?

Eccles:

Buying a tie.

Receptionist:

Mr. Liddell will see you now, Mr Eccles.

Eccles:

Fine, fine, my good woman. This is it 2,000, £2,000 a year and a pension...

Sellers:

Get out, you idiot!

Eccles:

Wait a minute, wait a minute! You ain't even heard me speak yet!

Sellers:

We'll write to you.

Eccles:

Well, that's no good, I can't read. Hey! Did you see that? He threw me out! Threw me out, the famous Eccles! He got no respect for the dead, that man! You can all laugh, but he never even let me say "winds light to variant." I'm going to tell my electrocution teacher about that...

Receptionist:

Will you come in now, Mr Greenslade?

Greenslade:

Thank you, madam. I was lead into the presence of a BBC official. I took off my shoes and knelt down.

FX:

[Gong sound]

Pompous BBC Official:

Now, Mr Greensleaves, can I... can I hear you say something?

Greenslade:

Certainly. Ahhmmm... "Winds light to variable."

Pompous BBC Official:

By Jove, you couldn't have picked a more... Appropriate phrase.

Greenslade:

Oh, it was nothing.

Pompous BBC Official:

Come, come! Say it again. Say it again... With a smile as it were.

Greenslade:

Of course. *[Clears throat]* "Winds light to variable."

Pompous BBC Official:

Delicious! Quite enchanting! Now, say it as though it were a national catastrophe.

Greenslade:

"Ohhhh! Winds light to variable! Ohhhhhh!"

Pompous BBC Official:

[Weepy] Very touching! Yes, quite touching. I... I think you have it, Mr Greenslade, you can start work at once.

Greenslade:

Gad! Me, a BBC announcer!

FX:

[Victory music link]

Seagoon:

Dear listeners, how could my private school for announcers, with it's 56,000 trainees exceed, succeed if the BBC kept turning down my ace pupils like Eccles?

Omnes:

We want bread, we want...

Seagoon:

[Screaming inaudibly at the lads] Please, gentlemen, keep up your spirits, lads, I mean, say after me, "Winds light to variable."

Omnes:

"Winds light to variable."

Seagoon:

There you are, lads, good! Doesn't that... Make you feel better?

Omnes:

[Negative answers, particularly from the Major Bloodnok]

Seagoon:

Whatwhatwhawhawhawhat's that? Bloodnok, please...

Bloodnok:

Listen, listen, Neddy...

Seagoon:

Mr. Bloodnok, please, I mean...

Bloodnok:

Never mind these naughty winds light to variable! What about some earthquakes in East Acton?

Seagoon:

What about earthquakes in East Acton?

Bloodnok:

What about...? I've been training at this school for six years to say "earthquakes in East Acton."

Seagoon:

So what?

Bloodnok:

Well, they never had one!

Seagoon:

Ah, ah, yes! But at the slightest tremor, I'll write to the BBC!

Bloodnok:

Oh...

Seagoon:

I will indeed! Keep up your morale, man! Say after me "Earthquakes in East Acton."

Bloodnok:

"Earthquakes in East Acton."

Seagoon:

There you are, how about that eh?

Bloodnok:

I, I, I feel better already.

Seagoon:

Of course you do!

Bloodnok:

Yes...

Seagoon:

Now here's a model of Sir Ian Jacob. Let's stick pins in it!

Bloodnok:

Right...

FX:

[Telephone rings]

Ellington:

Ohhh man! Don't you dare do that again!

FX:

[Hangs up phone]

Seagoon:

Thank you Fred Jacobs. Now...

Seagoon:

It's no good, dear listener. I can't deceive my pupils as to the seriousness of the situation. While Greenslade grew in popularity, I decided to strike!

FX:

[Planning to strike music]

Moriarty:

[Ominous laughing] Yess...

Grytpype:

So, Neddy, you want us to kidnap the entire BBC announcing staff?

Seagoon:

Yesyesyesyesyesyes! I've got to create vacancies for my own men. You'll be well paid.

Moriarty:

Paid? Money? Money? How much? How much?

Seagoon:

For every announcer removed I'll pay one simulation lead florin. And you can have that in writing.

Grytpype:

We'd rather have it in cash, if you don't mind.

Seagoon:

Very well *[laughs]*, here's a photograph of a pound.

Grytpype:

Thank you. Moriarty, see if this is a forgery.

Moriarty:

[Ambles away, mumbling]

Seagoon:

Now, gentlemen, when do you start work?

Grytpype:

When? Switch on the talking wireless.

FX:

[Click]

Announcer:

Here is the nyn a'clock noise. The president of Scrampsonpage drudnosit black... *[Grabbed by the throat]*

Grytpype:

You see, Neddy, we've started already! Now, excuse me while...

FX:

[Whoosh!]

Moriarty:

[Rushes up] Don't switch off, listen to this.

Sellers:

We must apologize for the break in the news. *[Begins to break up]* In the meantime, here is a record...

Eccles:

[Approaching] Hello, folks! Winds light to variable. Further outlook: Fine, fine, fine.

Seagoon:

Wonderful!- Or, if your French, wunderbar! - At last, Mr Eccles was being heard on the radio. One by one, the BBC announcers were kidnapped. Or, if they're over 21, adultnapped! Get it? *[Laughs]* Adultnapped! *[Sighs]* Max Geldray, pull up a bollard!

Max Geldray and Orchestra:

[Musical interlude: 'One, Two Button Your Shoe' is the title listed by the BBC, but it is incorrect]

Seagoon:

I still maintain it's all wrong, I can understand it at all, I, I say...

Gryttype:

Relax, Neddy, relax, your record's selling well, you've nothing to worry about...

Seagoon:

So when Relax, you say. My heavens, it's three months since you promised to kidnap Greenslade, but still no result!

Moriarty:

Oeoww! I tell you, don't worry, Neddy! At last we've found a chink in his armour

Bloodnok:

These Chinese get everywhere!

Gryttype:

Greenslade has a huge public. They want to see him in the flesh.

Seagoon:

What? All of it?

Gryttype:

Yes.

Seagoon:

He's a danger to shipping!

Gryttype:

Neddy, we are going to offer him a contract to appear on the stage.

Seagoon:

Gad, yes! If he leaves the BBC, the way will be clear for Mr. Eccles! An excellent plan! We'll do it!

Greenslade:

And do it they did. But the BBC didn't give me up without a fight. In fact, they even sent John Snagge round to my private abode.

FX:

[Knock on door, door opens]

Butler:

Thou knocked oh shivering white infidel? Cor blimey!

Greenslade:

Yes Is, ah, Wallace in?

Butler:

"Wallace"? Does thou mean The Great Greenslade? He whose voice drips like honey for the ears of the waiting world? He of the velvet petal tongue?

Snagge:

Yes, yes, that's Walt.

Butler:

Whom shall I say craves audience?

Snagge:

Tell him it's John Snagge--No, no, no, no, wait. Tell him... It's Snaggers.

Snagge:

He who's voice once-yearly rings out from the Thames motor launch, that usually fails. He who's voice tells the masses of a watery combat twixt men in two slender willow slim craft, that race on the bosom of our river and race past Mortlake Brewery towards their Olympic gold.

Butler:

Cor blimey, man, follow me.

Snagge:

Dear listeners, I was lead across a marble courtyard of solid wood and here and there silver fountains gushed claret. And there, there, lying in a silken hammock suspended between two former television toppers... Was Wallace Greenslade.

Greenslade:

Ah John, dear John! You couldn't have arrived at a better moment. I was just about to unveil a small, bronze statue of myself.

Snagge:

Now look here, Wallace. There's a rumour going around the Corporation that you're thinking of leaving.

Greenslade:

Well, John, I have been getting offers...

Snagge:

But Wallace, you're not going to leave us... Remember, you're British...

Greenslade:

Dear John. What can I say?

Snagge:

What's the matter Wallace? Aren't you happy with us. Isn't £3.10 a week enough?

Greenslade:

Not quite John.

Snagge:

But man alive! You've a free copy of the Radio Times every week.

Greenslade:

Yes, there is that...

Snagge:

Well... Now look Wallace.

Greenslade:

What, John?

Snagge:

I've been given the authority to offer you £4 a week and you can read the 9 o'clock news at half past if you want to and take your own time about it...

Seagoon:

Not so fast, Mr. John "Boatrace" Snagge!

Snagge:

That voice came out of a little ball of fat that sprang from behind a piano stool.

Seagoon:

My name is Neddy Seagoon!

Snagge:

What a memory you have.

Seagoon:

Not so fast!

Snagge:

I said it as slowly as possible.

Seagoon:

So! You're the famous John Snagge, eh? Known as the male Sabrina of Portland Place

Snagge:

Now steady Seagoon, or I'll ban your record on Housewife's Choice

Seagoon:

Huh-hum! [*Titters and starts to sing*] Be my lov... Never mind, I still have my shaving term.

Gryttype:

[*Rushes in*] Mr. Snagge, I fear you have arrived too late to save Mr Greenslade. He has already signed a theatrical contract at £5 a week.

Snagge:

Five pounds? There isn't that much!

Gryttype:

Yes, there is, and here it is in used stamps.

Snagge:

Alas! I cannot offer him more. So this, then, is the end of the once-great BBC announcing staff.

Orchestra:

[*A cornet plays the "Last Post"*]

Snagge:

Where are they now? That noble band, Andrew Timothy - missing. Alvar Liddell - went down with his lift. Richard Dimbleby - overweight. And finally, Ronald Fletcher - gone to the dogs.

Seagoon:

Stop! Stop! [*Crying*] You're breaking my heart. – I can help you! I have a man here to take their place. Speak, lad, speak!

Eccles:

Winds light to variable. Wait a minute, Mr. Nagg, you're... You're very lucky to get me!

Snagge:

I have no choice. Put him in a sack.

Seagoon:

So saying, Mr Snagge took the famous Eccles off on his tricycle. Next day, we took Greenslade off on his triumphal stage tour. Everywhere he went, success! Then the first opening night at the London Palladium. What a night that was! What a night! His merest whim was catered for.

Greenslade:

Neddy, bring me a merest whim.

Seagoon:

At once! At once, Wallace! In cellophane! Gad, there's a packed house out there waiting for you.

Greenslade:

How they love me!

FX:

[Knock on door]

Greenslade:

Neddy? Say "come in" for me.

Seagoon:

Of course, Wall, of course. Come in! Who is it?

Lou:

[Yiddish] It's Lou. I've come to say good evening.

Seagoon:

Your agent! Come in!

FX:

[Enters]

Lou:

Oh my lovely little Wallace! Oh, you're gonna kill'em tonight, you're a lovely boy! Ooh, you're lovely, make a lot of lovely money for me, make a fortune! Ooh, that lovely talking voice, I'll get you at Sullivan TV next time I promise you...

Seagoon:

I'm his manager, you understand...

Lou:

Out the way, Secombe, you're finished, all that shaving and singing, it's all finished

Seagoon:

Whatwhatwhawhawhat?

Lou:

On with the moxers, It's all washed up. Now then here, Wallace. Wallace, Wallace, Wallace, Val Parnell's outside tonight so do your best, I'll see you get a nice, big bonus. Goodbye, my lovely boy, that geld he's making for me... *[Exits]*

Seagoon:

You'd never think that man's father's a duke, would you?

Greenslade:

No.

Seagoon:

Well, don't, cuz he wasn't *[Laughs]*

FX:

[Knock on door]

Seagoon:

Who's there?

Henry Crun:

We are, mnk

Minnie Bannister:

Autograph hunters, buddy

Seagoon:

What do you want, Buddy?

Henry Crun:

An autograph.

Minnie Bannister:

Autograph.

Henry Crun:

Autogram.

Minnie Bannister:

A modern-style autograph, buddy. Dim-bund-giddle-oh! We want you're autograph, buddy.

Seagoon:

I'm very sorry, Mr Greenslade left his autograph at home.

Minnie Bannister:

Oh...

Seagoon:

Stop that knocking-type knocking!

Henry Crun:

Who are you to stop us doing knocking-type knocking?

Seagoon:

I'm Neddy Seagoon-type Neddy Seagoon.

Henry Crun:

Never heard of you-type, sir. Go away, sir.

Seagoon:

Go away! Never heard... I, I, I won't stand for this! Go away? Never heard of me? Open this door at once, come on, who's there?

Henry Crun:

Open the door!

Seagoon:

I can't. Some fool's taken the bolt off. Can you open it from your side?

Minnie Bannister:

No, no, no... Don't come in, I'm in the bath.

Seagoon:

What are you doing in the bath?

Minnie Bannister:

I'm not doing anything in the bath!

Seagoon:

Miss Bannister, explain what Mr Henry Crum is doing in your bathroom, you sinful woman!

Minnie Bannister:

He's washing a savage tiger.

Seagoon:

A tiger? A sinful savage tiger? I've had enough of this!

FX:

[Breaks in]

Throat:

[Roars]

Seagoon:

[Screams]

Greenslade:

Obviously time for Mr Ray Ellington.

Ray Ellington and his Quartet:

[Musical interlude: 'Jingle Bells']

Greenslade:

Ray Ellington is now appearing at the Battersea Dog's Home.

Greenslade:

The Wallace Greenslade Story, Part 3. As this scene opens, I am found in the star dressing room at the Palladium with my with my manager. I have five minutes to finish my Black Russian cigarette before I'm off.

FX:

[Door opens]

Lou:

Oh, my life! Ruined, my business, my wife and children, my wail, ruined! Ohhhh... Oh dear...

Seagoon:

Something wrong with you?

Lou:

Something wrong he says? The audience, they've gone, the momsers, 5 to 9, they got up and left!

Seagoon:

5 to 9? What? Wait! I've got a hunch!

Grytpype:

It suits you.

Seagoon:

Switch on the electric-type wireless.

Eccles:

Ha-lo, folks! Here's the old weather then. The old winds light to variable, going to have the sun in the day and gonna get dark at night *[Inaudible, singing]*

Seagoon:

So, that's where the audience are, back home listening to Eccles. He's the new idol. Greenslade? I fear he's stolen your public.

Greenslade:

Oh, I feel faint. Pour some brandy down my throat.

Seagoon:

Gad, Grytpype, you've got to kidnap Eccles or Greenslade is finished!

Grytpype:

Right. Moriarty? Have you got a black jack?

Moriarty:

No, mine's red.

Grytpype:

Never mind, Eccles is colorblind anyway. Let's go!

Moriarty:

Get up, there!

FX:

[They gallop away; scene-change music]

Seagoon:

Next morning, we read the terrible news.

Greenslade:

Listen, Ace BBC announcer Eccles, signed by Grytpype-Thynne for stage tour.

Seagoon:

The swine single crossed us!

Greenslade:

You mean, "double".

Seagoon:

No, this is the first time.

Greenslade:

This means... Ruin? No more... Luxury? I'll have to stop eating in the canteen? Give up my subscription to The Nursing Mother?

Seagoon:

And so we became vagrants.

Orchestra:

[Hearts and Flower]

Seagoon:

We wandered the streets. A bitter wind blew up from the east and I cursed the fact I was wearing a kilt! One christmas we were trying to make a living by diving for coins in the gutter from passing ships, when we found ourselves outside the London Palladium.

FX:

[Street scene, coin drops in cup]

Seagoon:

Thank you...

Seagoon and Greenslade:

[Singing] Comrades, comrades, ever since we were boys...

FX:

[Coin drops in cup]

Seagoon:

Thank you, ladie.

Throat:

A pleasure.

Seagoon and Greenslade:

[Singing] ...each other's...

Greenslade:

Here comes a rich customer.

Seagoon:

A hansom cab drew up and out stepped a ugly passenger.

Eccles:

Stand aside, my good man, my public awaits for me.

Seagoon:

Spare a copper for the guy?

Eccles:

What guy?

Seagoon:

This guy here, he's starving.

Eccles:

You see my secretary, my good man, I've got... *[Fades]*

Seagoon:

He brushed me aside with his brush. The northwind blew, flakes of white settled on my shoulder.
To cap it all, I've got dandruff!

Seagoon and Greenslade:

[Singing] Comrades - gladly - Comrades - sadly - ever since we were boys...

FX:

[Coin-type sound dropping into cup]

Seagoon:

Oh, thank you, kind sir.

Snagge:

It's nothing. I've plenty more buttons.

Snagge:

Aren't you Jewell & Wallace, or Morecambe & Wise?

Seagoon:

No, it's Seagoon & Greenslade.

Snagge:

Oh, horrors, how the mighty have fallen!

Seagoon:

You, too?

Snagge:

Here, here's a photograph of a bowl of soup.

Seagoon and Greenslade:

Thank you.

Snagge:

And when you've finished it, come and see me at the BBC. In six weeks time.

Greenslade:

And so, six weeks went by.

Seagoon:

Good heavens, Wal, six weeks have gone by!

Greenslade:

At the same time, inside the London Palladium, six weeks had also passed at the same speed.

Eccles:

Winds light to variable, that's what I'll say to them...

FX:

[Knock on door]

Eccles:

Oh, who is it?

Lou:

It's Lou, I've come to say good evening to you.

Eccles:

Come in, my good fellow.

Lou:

Oh, Eccles, Schmeccles, my lovely boy! You're gonna make a lot of money for me! We sold every seat in the place!

Eccles:

What are they gonna sit on?

Lou:

[Laughs] What a sense of humour he's got, he's funny! Witty, yes. Here, do your best, my little Eccles – Oh, think of the geld *[Exits]*

Eccles:

What a nice fellow... That's a nice... I like that fellow! Oh, hello, I didn't see you standing there...

Grytpype:

Eccles, don't forget now, you do well tonight and we'll give you a five-shilling rise.

Eccles:

Oh! That will bring my money up to 6 shillings a month! I'm rich! I'm rich! Oh, it's good to be alive!

Grytpype:

Yes, yes, steady, lad, steady, don't let it go to your head.

FX:

[Door opens]

Moriarty:

Grytpype! Here's his paycheck, just arrived.

Grytpype:

What? Let's see. £2,000. Right, Moriarty, take 6 shillings out and give it to our Charlie.

Eccles:

I heard that. Don't you dare give that six bob to Charlie, that's my money!

FX:

[Door opens]

Lou:

Oh, my life, it's happened again!

Eccles:

What?

Lou:

The audience got up and gone home, someone's took em away!

Eccles:

I'm going home then.

Grytpype:

No, no, no, no, wait, wait. Switch on the radio.

FX:

[Click. Big Ben chimes.]

Bluebottle:

This is the BBC Home Service. And here is Bluebottle with the news!

Eccles:

You swine, Bluebottle! You...

Orchestra:

[End music]

Greenslade:

And that was the Goon Show, a BBC recorded program featuring Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan and John Snagge, with the Ray Ellington Quartet and Max Geldray. The Orchestra was conducted by Wally Stott, script by Spike Milligan, announcer Wallace Greenslade, the program produced by Peter Eton.

Orchestra:

['Crazy Rhythm' outro]