

Buggins and Gubbins Go to the Flea Circus

by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode12

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Oh hello there, and welcome to my cottage I like to call Dave. As you already know if you heard last week's tale. My neighbour Jules will be bringing another story for us any..

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Who could that be? Hello, who is it?

Jules: Hello Nanny Bea, it's your neighbour Jules with a story.

Nanny Bea: Why, it is you! What a delightful surprise, do come in.

Jules: Hello Nanny Bea. I've got a teeny tiny tale for us today.

Nanny Bea: And the gorgeous Grace has got a great big wonder word.

[Wonder Word jingle]

Grace: Hi Nanny Bea this is Grace, I have a wonder word. It's lickety split

[Drum roll]

Lickety split is when you do something really fast, like how quickly I finish my brussel sprouts when we're having apple crumble for pudding

Bye Nanny Bea.

[piano out]

Nanny Bea: A girl after my own heart. I'd eat my way to apple crumble any day.

Jules: Make sure to listen out for likety split in our teeny, tiny tale of identical twin fleas. Would you like to hear a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please

Jules: Okay then, Buggins and Gubbins Go to the Flea Circus, adapted for radio

Buggins and Gubbins were identical fleas, no other fleas could tell them apart. They often used this to their advantage, one pretending to be the other. This amused them in their otherwise unamusing life. Unamusing because, according to them, they went no where and did no thing, except to school, to home, to school, to home etc until the week bumped into Sunday when they would go to church, to home.

The other fleas in their family seemed more than pleased with life on their host, Rufus the yellow labrador. At least they never complained. Buggins and Gubbins did enough of that for all of them, 'I'm bored,' 'I'm tired,' 'I'm stuck,' 'I'm hungry.' Did you notice, one of their voices is slightly different to the other? Gubbins was a stickler for pronunciation. He liked how it felt in his mouth to roll the words around before he let them out.

One cold March day when spring decided to sleep in, and the daffodils wished they could too, the circus came to town. This annual event was the highlight of the year, even for Buggins and Gubbins who had saved up all their pocket money for the last three weeks to spend at the circus. Well except of course what they spent on Sunday sweets and comic books which meant they actually had very little left to spend at the circus, but they had a plan, a slightly devious definitely mischievous plan. Using their identical appearance to their advantage, Gubbins would enter first and buy a ticket, making sure to strike up a memorable conversation with the ticket seller, 'Why good day to you ma'dam. May I perhaps, purchase a ticket? Just one. I had to work the graveyard shift and sell my pet amoeba to raise the funds so I do hope it is worth it.' Gubbins did not have a pet amoeba, nor did he work the graveyard shift as fleas do not have a graveyard, they simply fall off their host world when their days are done. The ticket seller who travels with the circus from host world to host world didn't care but she did notice and she most definitely remembered Gubbins, or someone exactly like Gubbins buying a ticket time stamped 18:00 hours!

Their plan was falling beautifully into place. Gubbins smiled and stepped forward at a normal pace. Once out of view he ran likely split over to the far west edge of the circus tent, where Buggins and Gubbins had scoped out in advance the smallest of openings, just big enough for one little flea to slip a ticket to another little flea. Buggins was on the other side, waiting. Without even a thank you he ran likely split back to the ticket seller. She was surprised to see him again. 'Why good day to you ma'dam,' he said, over articulated to match his brother's proud pronunciation.' Before she could ask him why or how he ended up in her line again, Buggins pretending to be Gubbins replied, 'I dropped my favourite scarf on my way here, so I slipped back out to collect it.' 'Oh goodness, well there is a sign that clearly says one entrance per ticket. We've had trouble in the past with slightly devious, definitely mischievous children sharing one ticket between them all, that's why we time stamp them now.' Buggins pretending to be Gubbins dropped his head and in a choked up but still articulated voice said, 'I sold my amoeba...for nothing.' The ticket seller was so moved she ushered him in quickly saying, 'Tell no one.'

Buggins pretending to be Gubbins thanked her profusely then ran into the crowded tent, likely split. The twins agreed to sit separately to avoid being found out. They had their money divided evenly and now without having to pay for two tickets, has enough left over for candy floss bigger than their heads and bright red kazoos to play along with the band.

This year's flea circus was an even more glorious extravaganza than years' past. The troop had a management buyout and now all with an equal stake in the business found a new level of commitment. The acrobats were more amazing, the lion tamer more terrifying and the clowns decidedly more clumsy, which is a good thing in clowns. In the center ring there was a platform, on a platform, on a platform, like a giant wedding cake only decorated in red, green and blue. On top of it all was the ring master himself - former magician turned opera tenor turned belly dancer turned telesales marketeer - the Great Gadzookey. He orchestrated the entire show from his platform, never losing focus or energy, directing the eye to one marvel after another. It was worth the entry fee to see him alone. As the final act of the night was announced, the Great Gadzookey became very serious. He dropped his perpetual flailing arms and made his way down the platform and the next one and the next one until he was on the sawdust covered central ring ground. The band played in time with his steps, when the Great Gadzookey took long, deep strides, the tubas bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bummed along with him. When he scuttled along shimmying his feet through the dirt and dust, the drummer shi, shi, shiiiiiiimered his cymbals. And when he darted from bletcher to bletcher looking for the ideal candidate, the trombone sliiid in and out, and iiiiin and oooooout. Finally the Great Gadzookey stopped and the music with him, bu duh bump pah. He was standing on the aisle next to Buggins. He looked Buggins straight in the eye then started walking again, this time more like a tinkling piano, plink, de, plink, de plunk. Once again he stopped.

This time he was standing three rows down from Gubbins and he lifted his gloved finger, pointed at Gubbins and said, 'Yooooooooou!' Gubbins didn't move. 'Yooooooooou,' the Great Gadzookey said again, 'come down here lad, likety split.' Well who could ignore the Great Gadzookey? So Gubbins wriggled down his bench, excuse me, pardon meing all the way as he squeezed past the other circus gowers in his row. Gubbins still had the last of his candy floss in his hand as he approached the Great Gadzookey. He closed his eyes, he would've closed his ears if he could, as he waited to be berated in front of the entire audience and the travelling circus troupe. Maybe he'd get more of a telling off, maybe they'd make him walk the tight rope or throw him to the lions. Gubbins swallowed again and again, trying not to cry. 'This boy,' announced the Great Gadzookey, 'this boy is the one, the only Rubberband Boy!' The crowd cheered. Gubbins peeled back a smile. He had no idea what the Great Gadzookey was talking about. 'Prepare to be transfixed, prepare to be transported to another reality as Rubberband Boy prepares to be transformed....' 'Into what?' thought Gubbins. 'Into the tallest flea in history!' the Great Gadzookey added. The crowd burst open with applause and cheers and whoops and hollers. Gubbins followed the ringmaster back to the main ring where what looked like a coffin was lying. The Great Gadzookey opened the box with an accordion centre, 'See for yourself, it's entirely empty.' He said as he knocked the inner sides with his baton. 'Climb in young man.' 'But I'm not the Rubberband Boy, I'm just a boy who should've bought two tickets.' 'Oh I'm fully aware of that, and I'm going to make you pay,' the Great Gadzookey whispered as he ushered Gubbins into the box, strapped him in and closed the lid. There was a hole at the top, just big enough for Gubbins' head to poke out and one on out the very bottom where his feet could poke out. The audience were mesmerised. Gubbins also ised, but more like terrorised, absolutely paralised, and soon quite likely pulverised.

'Watch as I stretch this young man into a giant!' Well a flea sized giant which is more of an ant but size is relative. Gubbins closed his eyes, he didn't want to see himself pulled apart.

Thomas: Go to NannyBea.com

Jules: Go there to find out about all our episodes. Tales & Tea is written for you, so please do let us know what you think. You can like or follow us on iTunes or Spotify. And get in touch if you'd like to be on the show like the glorious Grace.

[Be on the Show jingle]

Mr Announcer: This has been a Toad in the Hole production for NannyBea.com.