

THE RAT WHO LOVED JAZZ,
AND THE FLEA WHO GREW TO LIKE IT

Or alternatively,
SCRATCH

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information

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INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

Rainy Manhattan. The attic is modest, but organized and homely. There is a kitchen, an armchair, and a mattress. A record player is playing jazz. On a shelf, there is a bucket collecting the rainwater leaking through the roof. GEORGE - a sophisticated NYC rat, who wants to be human a little too much - is organizing the food he scavenged that day. He organizes his newspaper, books, and puts down his reading glasses. He turns the record player off. Only the pouring rain is audible.

He puts on his pajamas, turns the lights off, lays on his mattress and tucks himself in.

He closes his eyes peacefully. He gets an itch on his back, but scratches it, unbothered. His satisfaction after the first scratch doesn't last long, the itch comes back. He keeps scratching his back, his expression becoming confused. He opens his eyes and turns around to find the reason for the itch.

It is revealed that FELIX - an audacious flea with a little too much confidence - is sleeping behind GEORGE, clinging onto him. GEORGE notices and jolts backwards.

GEORGE

Wha- Remove yourself, you
bloodsucking parasite.

He pushes him away, kicking with his legs. FELIX jumps up.

FELIX

Hey!

GEORGE gets up, turns the lights on and hurriedly puts on his nightgown.

GEORGE

Oh, no, no no.

FELIX walks to the armchair and sits down. He picks up one of the books from the coffee table. It is a playbook of Agatha Christie's Mousetrap.

FELIX

(laughing)

How ironic.

GEORGE is pacing up and down, scratching himself, confused and panicking.

GEORGE

You... should not be here.

FELIX continues looking through the books. He jokingly tries on GEORGE's glasses.

GEORGE (cont'd)
Oh, no, no, don't-

GEORGE takes his glasses out of his hands, groaning, then goes to his kitchen and pours himself some water to calm himself down. Regaining his composure, he turns to FELIX.

GEORGE (cont'd)
I'm not one of those filthy basement rats. I have never had fleas and I don't plan on starting now.

FELIX
Oh, don't think so highly of yourself.

GEORGE starts tapping with his feet, scratching his itch. He goes up to the door and opens it.

GEORGE
Please leave.

He points out the door. FELIX gets up and leaves. GEORGE closes the door behind him. He sighs happily. He turns around, but FELIX is standing right there, back in the room. FELIX is laughing, GEORGE groans.

CUT TO:

INT. ATTIC - DAY

GEORGE comes out in a bathrobe, drying his hair with a towel. FELIX is walking around, observing and touching things. The record player is playing jazz.

FELIX
Don't you have any heavy metal?

He goes to touch the record, but GEORGE quickly runs towards him.

GEORGE
Hey, hey, watch out, that is an incredibly rare vinyl. Thelonious Monk.

GEORGE starts scratching himself.

GEORGE (cont'd)
Oh, for God's sake.

GEORGE turns around and goes to drink water. FELIX keeps looking through GEORGE's things, he touches the record player needle, and it scratches the vinyl. The music stops with an awful screech.

The two jolt around and face each other, staring.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Get out!

FELIX pauses and crosses his arms.

FELIX

No.

GEORGE

Can't you just jump onto someone else?

FELIX

I could, but I don't want to.

GEORGE

Give it-

GEORGE tries to take the record from FELIX, but he refuses. The two end up pushing each other into the shelf, knocking the bucket full of rainwater onto themselves.

CUT TO:

They're sitting next to each other. They're both drenched in water. GEORGE is shivering and scratching himself. The ruined record keeps jumping back to the same place.

FELIX

Cold?

GEORGE keeps scratching his itch.

FELIX (cont'd)

So... What's for dinner?

GEORGE

You have some nerve.

FELIX starts laughing. GEORGE gets up and stands in the faint beam of light coming through the window. He is looking up at the sky, thinking.

He keeps scratching. A raindrop falls on his face through a new leak on the roof. He groans loudly.

CUT TO:

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

GEORGE is having trouble sleeping. He keeps scratching himself. FELIX is peacefully sleeping on his back.

GEORGE groans and slowly gets up, careful not to wake FELIX.

He takes a kitchen towel, slowly walks up to FELIX and places it over his mouth and nose.

FELIX wakes up, screaming. The two struggle, but he manages to push GEORGE away.

Both panting, FELIX looks at him in horror. They are staring at each other.

FELIX walks towards the door and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. ATTIC - DAY - MONTAGE

... GEORGE replaces the needle on the record player. He puts on a good vinyl.

... He is washing dishes happily, dancing. His favorite music is playing.

... He tidies his space, organizing things.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

He sits down, pleased with himself. He is listening to the music, but slowly his happy expression fades, and he starts thinking. He raises his arm to scratch himself, only to realize, his itch is gone.

He gets up and looks at the ruined vinyl. Frustrated, he tries to break it on his leg, but is unsuccessful.

He leaves, only to return with a hammer. He finishes the job by breaking the record in half.

He sits back in his chair, panting. All alone, he curls up in a ball on the armchair and sleeps.

CUT TO:

INT. ATTIC - DAY

GEORGE opens his eyes to noises. FELIX is shuffling through the records. GEORGE gets up. FELIX turns around.

FELIX

You won't try to murder me again,
will you?

GEORGE

My behavior was... unacceptable.

FELIX

You know, the- the jazz music isn't
so bad... Here...

He hands GEORGE the record he tried to hide, wrapped with a bow. GEORGE takes it, realizing it is his favorite album. He opens it, only to realize it is the same broken vinyl FELIX ruined, stuck together with tape. FELIX is smiling naively.

FELIX (cont'd)

Well, put it on.

GEORGE

Oh, um, maybe later.

FELIX

Oh, come on.

FELIX goes to put on the record. GEORGE is looking at him, smiling in disbelief.

Suddenly the record starts playing with an awful screech. GEORGE gets a terrible itch. He scoffs, still smiling.

CUT TO BLACK

END.