

Peter and his Pickled Peppers
by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode 1

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Hello and welcome back for our very first story of the new year. My cup of tea is in hand waiting for my neighbour Jules to arrive with our tale any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Whoever could that be, hello?

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

Nanny Bea: Of course it is, come, come and Happy New Year.

Jules: Happy New Year! I'm so glad to be back with you after the holidays.

Nanny Bea: You aren't the only one who's back, we also have a caller with our very first wonder word of the year.

[drum roll]

Tiggy: Hi Nanny Bea, it's Tiggy here with a wonder word. Today's wonder word is hankering.

[Wonder Word theme]

Tiggy: A hankering is when you really, really want something like craving a big piece of chocolate.

[chime]

Jules: Why thank you Tiggy. Do you have a hankering for a story?

Nanny Bea: Yes please

Jules: Okay then, Peter and his Pickled Peppers

Peter Piper apparently picked a peck, whatever that is of pickled peppers, yes those things that come in jars. So this popular practically impossible to pronounce at pace poem, begs

the question...why? Why did Peter, a piper by trade, go out and pick those pickled peppers? And that's where the story begins.

Peter had been piping all day long and well into the night. This happened every year on the 11th day of Christmas. Yes, just when you thought Christmas was over, it's only just begun! The first day of Christmas starts on Christmas day with that partridge sitting patiently in a pear tree just waiting to be presented. Then of course you've got the gold rings, the laying geese, swimming swans, and you know and so on. Until you reach the 4th of January when everyone wants their own set of 11 pipers piping. When Peter first started piping there were lots of other pipers so they could spread the load, but these days, pipers are rare, as are the maids a milking but they don't need so many of those. Yes pipers just aren't usually in demand since that Pied Piper of Hamelin ruined their reputation. Now fair enough he had rid the town of all their rats and the mayor refused to pay him but to lure the children away, that was just uncalled for and pipers to this day are paying the price.

So here's Peter, one of the few pipers left, toot, toot, tooting around the clock. He started before sunrise and took his first break at the aptly named meal, break-fast. And boy was it fast. The Lords a leaping had built up such massive appetites that once they stopped leaping they started eating and couldn't stop, they ate their way through their midnight snack, through any leftovers from dinner and onto the piper's breakfast so when Peter arrived in the dining tent there was nothing left but a few stale rolls and a couple pats of 'I can't believe it was ever butter'. Any piper worth his salt knows to avoid dry rolls when you're working, not only are they a choke hazard but they take the (whistle) right out of their whistle so Peter just had a glass of water and the remains of a hard candy found in the shadows of his pocket. He was so hungry he was hollow, hankering for a massive meal but the show must go on.

So Peter and the others returned to piping. They played some sweet little tunes mimicking the bird song in the trees. It did cause a bit of confusion in the bird community. They aren't just singing for singing sake, each tune has meaning. The pipers sent out offers of marriage, boundary disputes, incitements to war, they even joined a protest against birds of a feather flocking together, this was all lost of course on Peter. He just thought he was playing some jolly tunes. Peter and the other pipers had to get more inventive as the morning moved on since the birds like to sing most of their songs at the break of day. Little did they know that once the birds were done singing they continued to listen and respond to the pipers songs; one of their latest ones translating into something like, 'come and eat our lunch, it's in the tent to the left of the parking garage.' So when Peter finally had a break for lunch, the all you can eat pizza buffet was all eaten and only tomato sauce bird prints remained. Peter's heart sank. The thought of all you can eat pizza had carried him through. He was so hungry he was hollow, hankering for a massive meal but the show must go on. So He dragged himself towards the door when one of the maids who'd been milking walked past with a jug of milk sloshing either side of her. She took pity on the hungry pipers and gave them all she had left along with her homemade cheese and freshly baked rolls, seems she was a maid a milking, and a churning, and a baking too.

The pipers were revived and full of beans, well not literally beans, full of cheese, bread and milk just doesn't sound as snappy. So Peter and his fellow pipers got back to piping. There is something magical about piping as the sun sets. It's like the sun is singing goodnight as it sinks into the sky. Quite a crowd gathered to hear the pipers play, so many in fact that when it came time for their dinner break, they had to squeeze through the mob to reach the dinner tent. Peter being the tallest of the pipers was at the back so the last to wiggle and worm his way through the crowd. By the time he reached the tent, you guessed it, the spaghetti mountain was more of a spaghetti molehill. Peter slurped the last three sprigs of pasta down his gullet. He was so hungry he was hollow, hankering for a massive meal but the show must go on.

And only for a few hours more. To be honest the sparse after-hours crowd has pretty low expectations. The pipers kept it mellow, a little freestyle jazz, some medieval lullabies, sprinkled with a generous portion of the sound of silence. An artistic choice of course. When the clock finally struck midnight Peter put his pipe down. He was so hungry he was hollow, hankering for a massive meal but the midnight snack would have to do. Peter and the pipers made their way over to the dining tent. The Chef and his staff were from Christmas Island, and yes, there really is a Christmas Island. They like to make the most of this season and fly all around the world during the holidays, problem is with the jet lag and all those time changes, they got a bit confused and served the midnight snack at 10pm. Oh it was luscious all those tortilla chips smothered in melted cheese, crumbled beef and cream of the soured variety with a dollop of guacamole to top it all off. All around the nacho feast were bowls for those who like to add some zing with black olives, chopped cilantro and of course jalapenos or what some may call, a peck of pickled peppers. It was a sight to behold, a glorious spectacle sitting there for hour upon hour until it congealed into a multi coloured mush. Most of the pipers just walked away but Peter was so hungry he was hollow, hankering for a massive meal with only a mound of mush on offer. He tried scooping up with his fingers. The cold sludge tasted worse than hunger and then he saw it, a bowl of jalapenos almost smiling at him. He had never dared to even try them before but hunger makes you brave. He took one pepper and crunched. It was spicy, it was zingy, it was like his tongue was doing a happy dance. How had he lived so long without ever even trying pickled peppers! He had another, then another until finally he just grabbed the entire bowl, picked up a peck of pickled peppers. To this day no one knows how many pickled peppers Peter Piper picked but it was enough to satisfy his hankering at last.

THE END

Nanny Bea: Thank you Jules, you never cease to amaze me with your skills. Just thinking of Peter picking a peck of pickled peppers gets my tongue in a twister.

Jules: I may have practiced a few times.

Nanny Bea: Another dear friend of mine who likes to hit little balls into only slightly larger holes once told me, the harder I practice the luckier I get! I would have never mastered the didgeridoo if not for his advice.

Jules: Didgeridoo sounds like a wonder word?

Thomas: Go to NannyBea.com

Jules: Go there to find out how to be part of the show like Tiggy with our wonder word. On NannyBea.com there's our entire collection of stories to listen to and to read along. We'll be here next week with another tales and tea.

[Be on the Show jingle]

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