

The Interstellar Optic Smeller Radiographic Alien Teller

by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode 4

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: What perfect timing, the tea is freshly brewed and my neighbour Jules will be joining us with a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Why whoever could that be? Hello, how may I help you?

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

Nanny Bea: What a coincidence, come in I was just telling our listening friends about you and your story. We have a caller as well, with a Wonder Word.

[drum roll]

Isabelle: Hello Nanny Bea, my name's Isabelle and I have a Wonder Word for you it's kaleidoscope.

[Wonder Word theme]

A kaleidoscope is mixture of patterns and colours. It can even be in a tube you look into and twist around.

Jules: Listen carefully and see if you can find Isabelle's Wonder Word in today's tale, speaking of tales...are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please

Jules: Okay then, The Interstellar Optic Smeller Radiographic Alien Teller, adapted for radio

Marly O'Connery lived on a farm, ee ie, ee ie, oh. And on that farm she had some ducks...and some pigs, a couple cows and lots of chickens. I mean there's always room for chickens.

What there wasn't room for was the space ship she was trying to hide behind the barn when the corn was high, in the silo when the wheat was low and under the bales of hay when the cows weren't hungry.

Marly wanted to tell her family but the timing never seemed right. There was always something going on.

Marly meant to tell her brother when he wasn't practicing for the Moosefest.

She was going to tell her mother when she wasn't mending something on the farm.

And she might even have told her uncle if he wasn't working a second job at the Hodgepodge Bakehouse, home of the famous Prugel. (that's a pretzel crossed with a bagel for those of you who don't know)

This wasn't Marly's plan, I mean to hide the aliens and their ship. It happened by surprise one hot summer's night after the Burning Feet Beer Festival, where no feet were burnt but beer definitely made it festive. Marly left early to add the finishing touches to her science fair project, an interstellar optic smeller radiographic alien teller. Marly's always wanted to be a star, not the signing and dancing, tabloid romancing kind of star, no, she wanted to be an actual star. Way up in the sky, far away from their farm and Muskegon county, shining always shining, flooding the night with sparkling light for all the world to see and around the clock as Marly says, 'it's always night somewhere, there was always someone to shine on, someone to light up'. That is why she built the interstellar optic smeller radiographic alien teller, but I'll come back to that later.

Even before that science fair project, Marly tried to be a star at home for her mother who lost her sparkle when Papa moved away to start another family.

She tried to shine for her uncle who'd left his job in IT to help Mama on the farm. When Uncle Kitch wasn't working, he was worrying about working and wishing he was still in an office pushing paper instead of bailing hay.

She couldn't shine for Lawrence, her teenage brother. When Papa left, Lawrence left, not physically, just emotionally. He used to be so chatty and sociable but now he just hides or escapes, anything to avoid a conversation.

Marly wanted to shine for them all, to bring back their smiles. Whenever she was home from school she would set the table without being asked and keep her room extra tidy. But Marly couldn't seem to lighten the mood. That's when the inventions started. Inventions to bring light into her home.

She won 9th place for her pedal powered Jack O Lantern at the local Pumpkinfest, 'most enthusiastic' ribbon she won. It did light up the porch until the pumpkin turned to mush.

She made a solar powered spearmint sunbed from recycled gum wrappers and did a lot of chewing that month. None of the family was too keen to lie in a bed of gum wrappers.

Then there was her diamante disco ball covered in bottle caps. With the right lighting it almost sparkled a kaleidoscope of colours around the dining room.

The Annual Science Fair was the perfect excuse to pull out all the stops, to literally shoot for the stars or rather shoot for one star. All it would take was one star to brighten the world. The sun, Marly had been told, was a kind of star and it does a plenty good job. Just imagine how much brighter the world would be with two! No more lurking in dark shadows or fumbling in the dark. Sun to light the day and Marly's closer star to light the night, just as bright.

Now let's be clear, Marly knew you couldn't just lasso a star and pull it in a bit closer. No, her plan was to nudge it a bit closer with a passing ship. Accuracy wasn't a concern as the night sky is packed full of stars. She was sure any would do. All she needed was an interstellar optic smeller radiographic alien teller, to make contact with an alien race who were in the area, persuade them to nudge a gigantic flaming star and bingo! Job done. Marly was ever the optimist.

The interstellar optic smeller radiographic alien teller was making good progress. After several trial runs, it was nearly ready. Marly just wanted to add some decorative elements, presentation is everything. She'd filled her pockets with a kaleidoscope of coloured beer caps from the Burning Feet Beer Festival. They would be the perfect addition to her project, surely this would be her crowning glory. She'd already sent some practice messages saying, 'Attention passing aliens, I need your help,' not entirely confident that her calculations were accurate. Would they get the message in time for the fair?

Marly hung on to that hope as she walked back home under the night sky. Up above were so many suitable stars, she wondered which one would become a bright light for the night but as she was trying to choose, she saw one fall from the sky and it looked like it landed behind their barn. Marly ran home and the kaleidoscope of bottle caps bounced out leaving a trail behind her.

The light that had fallen was so bright, it surrounded their barn like a halo. And there was a whirring sound, sloooooowing toooooo a stop, then a shape was visible in the halo's light. Maybe it was an angel she thought, with flailing wings either side, wings that started to look more like arms, like an extra set of arms and a head twice as big as their body and feet like flippers so they waddled as they walked. On closer inspection she was not convinced they were angels. 'Good, goodevening,' she said trying to sound friendly. 'Gooo, goo, goo, go good ev Eh nig,' the definitely not an angel replied. 'Attention passing aliens, I need your help,' they added. 'Oh goodness me,' thought Marly, 'I should've sent a more detailed message.' She explained this to the alien, Zleeblipteega. That's the closest she could get to his actual name. And he wasn't travelling alone, from behind the barn came 2 others, Jeeelrptikoekah and

gwegalgwegalnumpticon. Marly asked to call them Zlee, Jee and Gwee. They agreed. Her mutilation of their native language was painful.

They on the other hand became more and more proficient in speaking English. It seems every word they hear they remember and Marly uses a lot of words. Eventually they came to understand what she probably should've put in the message, that she wanted a spaceship to nudge a star. They were not that ship, they did not have the ability to nudge a star with their ship, it was made of gelatin and would simply melt on contact.

Marly enjoyed their company. They spent warm summer nights telling her about their travels, they learned together and laughed together so much that Marly didn't want to think what she was thinking. She couldn't hide them forever, they needed to make their way home.

This trip to earth was against the alien travellers code of conduct so they had to sneak away unnoticed. Not that Muskegon county had many residents to notice, only one person per acre but no aliens. And Zlee, Jee and Gwee wanted to keep it that way.

The problem is, a spaceship requires fuel, even a gelatin spaceship. It took some time to figure out what kind of fuel they used exactly. 'It pop, pop, pops' said Zlee. Marly ran into her room and brought back a pack of popping candy. 'Nooo,' said Jee, 'it pops into little white clouds.' 'Oh, I know, I know,' said Marly and she returned with a cotton ball. 'Nooo,' said Gwee 'It smells of golden melted butter.' Well that stumped Marly for a good three weeks in fact, while she kept hiding the aliens. Zlee, Jee and Gwee were just about to give up hope on the day Marly went on a school trip. The entire class had gone to the movies to see the much anticipated, Return of the Jibberwacky. They had such fun, each were allowed one juice box and a small bag of, well I don't want to spoil the surprise, maybe you can guess what Marly felt when she reached into the bag, a bag full of something that pop, pop, popped into little white clouds and smelled of golden melted butter!

Yes you guessed it, popcorn! She stopped eating and quickly stuffed the entire bag into her pocket. That bag stayed there until Marly returned home. She said a quick hello to the family and then snuck out to show the aliens what she'd found. 'It pops into clouds and smells of butter!' The aliens couldn't stop smiling from antennae to antennae. 'We call it popcorn!' 'Po oo Puh Cor nuh, po op cor nuh, popcorn, popcorn, popcorn!' they shouted as loud as they could, fortunately their alien voices were so small no one else could hear.

That bagful was just enough to get Zlee, Jee, and Gwee alllllll the way home. Marly was so excited she ran into the house to tell her family all about it but then she thought she'd better not, with the alien code and all. Instead she just smiled, a lot. And her smile made her Mama smile and her uncle smile and even her ever so quiet brother smile. That happy dinner time was the beginning of many. With her smile alone Marly brought light into her home and couldn't help but spread it around wherever she'd go.

The End

Nanny Bea: Oh, thank you Jules for that enlightening story, you've really brightened up my day.

Jules: Like Marly did.

Nanny Bea: Marly and her alien friends. They were ever so helpful, quite contrary to the aliens I've encountered. A surly lot they were, not at all friendly like the ones in the story. Will we be so fortunate to have another any time soon?

Jules: If you mean another story, then absolutely I'll be back next week with more Tales and Tea?

Thomas: Go to NannyBea.com

Jules: Go there to find all our episodes written out so you can read along with us. Tales & Tea is made for you so do let us know how we're doing. You can leave a review and subscribe through podcast apps like Spotify or iTunes.

[Be on the Show jingle]

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