

Message in a Teeny, Tiny Bottle

by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode 7

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Why I'm Nanny Bea and welcome to my cottage I like to call Dave. Your timing is impeccable. I've just boiled the kettle and my neighbour Jules will be bringing a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Hello? How may I help you?

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

Nanny Bea: And so it is, come in. So lovely of you to bring us a story.

Jules: Lovely of you to provide the tea.

Nanny Bea: I have more than tea for you, I also have a message from the ever sparkling Emma with a Wonder Word.

[Wonder Word jingle]

Emma: Hi Nanny Bea my name's Emma and I've got this week's wonder word which is Higgledy piggedly!

[Drum rol]

Higgledy piggedly is when things are done in a confusing or disorderly way. A bit of a jumble like the words higgledy piggedly.

That's all for now, bye.

[Chime]

Nanny Bea: Thank you Emma! Listen closely and to see if our Wonder Word snuck into our story.

Jules: I have a feeling it did. Today we gonna hear the story of real life birds who save the day with a message in a teeny, tiny bottle. Would you like to hear a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please

Jules: Okay then, Message in a Teeny, Tiny Bottle, adapted for radio

Long ago when the birds were the only ones tweeting and clocks were the only ones ticking, there lived a little red robin. As you expect she started out as an egg, blue all over and speckled with grey like the other robins. Her mother built a nest of moss and leaves inside an old flower pot that had long since been empty of flowers and was turned on its side. All was going to plan when one day mother robin left the nest unattended but only for a few minutes. Well that was a few minutes too long with a totally cuckoo, cuckoo in the area. Now usually cuckoos are the evil geniuses of the animal kingdom. Instead of building a nest of their own and investing their time and effort raising their offspring, the **cuckoos** palm off their chicks to other species and let them do the hard work. Usually, but like I said this was a particularly cuckoo, cuckoo. When mother robin was away for those few short minutes, instead of leaving one of the cuckoo's eggs for the robin to raise, this higgledy piggledy minded cuckoo **STOLE** one of the eggs. This wasn't the plan and the cuckoo bird started to figure that out as she flew around with a blue all over speckled egg in her grips.

The other cuckoos already spoke ill of her, our higgledy piggledy bird never seemed to do things right. And this day was no exception. In a flap and increasing embarrassment our cuckoo decided to place this blue speckled egg in yet another bird's nest. Talk about messing with the natural order. She pretended it was one of her own but the other cuckoos were not fooled. All the same, in her higgledy piggledy fashion our cuckoo deposited this bright blue egg into the nest of a pigeon, not just a pigeon, a prize winning homing pigeon. The robin's little blue egg looked out of place in the nest of big beige eggs but the deed was done and the cuckoo, cuckoo flew off to create chaos somewhere else.

Had our little red robin landed in any other pigeon's nest, she may well have been chucked out, thrown to her end but she didn't land in any other pigeon's nest, she landed in Mildred's nest. Now Mildred was the daughter of the legendary 'Mocker' who flew 52 brave missions and she was the proud mother of many a war hero. Her children served as carrier pigeon's taking valuable messages to those who needed to hear them. One was code name 498, Skipper Thomas Crisp sent him with a message for help when they were attacked by a German U-boat in August 1917. Sadly the skipper was killed but, despite being wounded in one wing by shrapnel, Mildred's son delivered the message in time for help to be sent to save the crew. Her daughter 'Cher Ami' lost her foot and one eye but still her message saved a large group of infantrymen.

Mildred was not going to let a little challenge like being a little blue speckled egg, get in the way. She raised robin as her own and treated her as she did all the other baby birds, baby birds who would grow into military carrier pigeons. This job was of utmost importance, in the middle of a war long ago, communication was difficult, it could be cut off and regularly intercepted by the enemy meaning they could hear the secret message. By using birds our soldiers could send messages rolled up in tiny capsules attached to the birds. The enemy

thought they were just wild birds amongst the many birds in the air. So carrier pigeons could travel with important messages without the enemy ever knowing.

Robin went through all the usual training to become a military carrier pigeon. She was taken out in a cage, 5 miles, then 10 miles then up to 50 miles from home, and released to fly back. It was hard work with pigeons being much, much, much bigger, but Robin kept up. When it came to fitting her message the harness was way too large and the capsule far too long. They tried making a special one just for her but no one could write a message that small. Robin was distraught. How could she save people like her step brothers and sisters did?

One day when she was nearly alone as the others had all gone out on missions, Robin started painting the most beautiful pictures, so beautiful in fact, that the remaining birds couldn't help but comment, 'How lovely! Quite marvellous! You should frame those!' Robin liked the praise but even more, she liked how it made everyone smile.

From that day she started painting little pictures and built up quite a collection. She approached the next group of pigeons preparing to go out on their missions, 'Would you kindly take this picture with you tucked inside your capsule?' They all agreed. These little pictures of joy were sent to soldiers on the battlefield and as they were in horrible trouble, sending off a message for help they'd open the teeny, tiny capsules to find a little picture of joy painted by Robin. Robin never knew how much her own mission changed lives but all over the world there are the teeniest, tiniest pictures painted by a Robin who wanted to spread light even in the darkest times.

The end

Nanny Bea: Thank you Jules. You know to this day I use Peregrine our local carrier pigeon. He's faster than our current broadband and half the price.

Jules: Oh is that how you do it, just yesterday I was standing outside in the snow to get a decent signal. It would've been a lot more comfortable with some shoes on.

Nanny Bea: I can't wait 'til there is enough snow for my toboggan, then I can get to the church in record time.

Jules: That must surprise the vicar!

Nanny Bea: Nothing I do seems to surprise him?

Jules: Well you always surprise me Nanny Bea. I wonder what you'll have in store for us next week when I'm back for more tales and tea?

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 our joyful caller Emma.

[Be on the Show jingle]

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

