

Snakes and Snails and Puppy Dog Tails

by Jules de Jongh

Season 2 Episode10

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Hello and welcome, I was hoping you would join us. My neighbour Jules will have a story for us any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: I wonder who that is? Who is it?

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

Nanny Bea: Oh what perfect timing, come in dear, what a delight to see you.

Jules: Why thank you Nanny Bea. I'm so happy to be here with you.

Nanny Bea: We have a caller as well. Will has brought us a new Wonder Word.

[Wonder Word jingle]

Will: Hello Nanny Bea this is Will and I have a wonder word, it's buckaroo.

[Drum roll]

A buckaroo is a cowboy or someone who acts like one. I'd like to act like one.

Bye for now.

[piano out]

Nanny Bea: For you and me both Will. I long to ride across the prairie herding cattle along the way.

Jules: Well you might get a little taster of that in today's tale when George with a G has a head full of thoughts, he thinks about how the moon hangs on in the sky, how ketchup hangs on in the bottle but mostly he thinks about...well probably better you hear for yourself. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please

Jules: Okay then, Snakes and Snails and Puppy Dog Tails, adapted for radio

It was an ordinary day, one more after a long line of ordinary. 'How can boredom be so boring!' thought George. George had a lot of thoughts. He thought about how the moon hangs on in the sky, and how ketchup hangs on in the bottle but mostly he thought about words. Why people choose to say this instead of that. Why they call that a boat and this a bat. It was one of those days when George started to notice the most peculiar thing, but not at first.

At first George was sitting in class where he was supposed to be learning how to chunk numbers. 'Chunking?!' thought George, 'now who thought of chunking, it could just as easily been blocking or gridding or like my mom calls it, dividing.' It was at that point Mr Swanson stopped his chunking display and called out, 'George with a G,' he said there were two Georges in class and he thought this distinction was funny. 'George with a G, get your head in the game.' Which had the opposite effect to the one Mr Swanson intended. George saw his head roll off his shoulders across the room, out the back door and into the playground, where a group of older boys started kicking it around until one made a goal! At that George with a G touched the place where his head usually is, and it was there, phew what a relief.

'I think I'll keep that to myself,' George said wisely. And his day reverted to ordinary, well that was until he was walking home past Wise Old Pete who sits on the corner of the street singing and playing his harmonicas, he has a whole box of them, each looks the same but they don't sound the same. Wise Old Pete started playing a song George has heard before. He didn't stop, he knew he wasn't allowed, 'Come straight home from school,' mom always said but he did start walking v e r y s l o w l y. Wise Old Pete noticed a horse on his lunch box, a lunch box that used to be his brother's, a lunch box that did not reflect George's taste or interests but it was full of yummy food so he didn't mind. From that horse, Wise Old Pete shouted out a greeting to George, 'Yee haw my slow walkin' buckaroo.' There are worse things to be called and George probably wouldn't have taken any notice if it weren't for the spurs that appeared on his shoes, that looked more like boots, and his legs fully bowed around the back of a horse. It was a mighty fine way to travel home thought this very-happy- to-be-called buckaroo. When Scout, the name he gave his new mode of transport, arrived at his doorstep, George slid right off, wiped the chewin' tobacco from his lips and moseyed on into Rancho de George. You could smell the BBQ ribs from outside. What a perfect meal for a dusty traveller. George sat at the table. 'Oh, you're keen! Dinner isn't for another half hour,' Mom said and she didn't even notice his spurs or hat or, George looked at himself for more buckaroo gear but it was gone, so was Scout his faithful steed, he found out when he looked out the window. But the bowlegged stagger remained, George indulged the memory as he left the table and made his way down the hall.

After that the ordinary set in again. Amazing how quickly we forget the amazing. It wasn't until dinner was done and the family had abandoned Dad in the kitchen, he hollered out as he often does, 'Come on gang, all hands on deck!' meaning, 'Come help me do the dishes.' George is often the last to arrive for this nightly ritual but not today! He was the first on board, well technically his hands were the first on board and when I say on board, I mean on board. The family home, specifically the kitchen, had transformed into a ship out at sea with

waves crashing and ropes lashing. It was no place for landlubbers with the ship tipping from side to side. George hoisted the mainsail, battened down the hatches, he even shivered his timbers, not something he'd ever done before, or since for that matter. As he polished the last of the decks he looked around to see every dish done and every parent happy.

This time the ordinary didn't come back, George's head was full of games and cowboys and pirates for the rest of the night until he laid down to sleep. Dad was on story duty and he started with a poem his grandmother used to say to him. 'What are little boys made of? Snakes and snails and puppy dog tails. That's what little boys are made of,' Dad said as he ruffled George's hair. George had had enough excitement for one day so without looking down to see if it was true, he closed his eyes and fell fast asleep with a head full of words and a heart full of memories.

The end

Nanny Bea: Thank you Jules. I do remember that poem well but it went, snips and snails.

Jules: Snips of what?

Nanny Bea: Snails I suppose. I never really gave it much thought.

Jules: And I'd rather not! How about we talk about next week, when I return 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 talented young Will.

[Be on the Show jingle]

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