

How to Succeed in 6th Grade without Really Trying

by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode19

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Just a minute, I'm on my way, oh, hello, sorry for my disarray, you caught me by surprise. And I'm forever grateful as my neighbour Jules will be bringing us a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: See what I mean? Hello, who may I ask is knocking?

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

Nanny Bea: As we suspected. Hello dear, do come in.

Jules: Hello Nanny Bea, I have a tale today that could be a life changer? Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please

Jules: Okay then, How to Succeed in 6th Grade without Really Trying, a story for Tiggy

One blustery afternoon, and I say blustery because there is no other way to describe it, just like a Pooh Bear kind of day, the trees rattled, the grass waved and everyone else held on to everything else in case the wind had plans to carry them away.

That is precisely why Mr Usher, ushered his class back inside. Their sports day practice would have to wait another day. What a relief that was for Tiggy. She'd meant to practice for the practice but was so busy practicing for her other practices that she didn't have time to practice. Tiggy was a very busy tortoise. She was in the marching band twirling her baton in front, well she was supposed to be twirling her baton in front but with her little legs often found herself twirling at the back. She was part of the journalism club but the pressure of deadlines was far too much so she was moved to the lunch menu segment, the menu never changed, Tiggy spent her time working out how to describe the same thing in a different way. Quite a challenge, I mean how many ways can you say meatballs on Monday or tacos on Tuesday. And of course there was The Trampoline Troup, The Myth Buster Group, Mimes and Mimics, Clones and Physics, Eco Warriors, Territorials, The Spelling Bee, Tales (and you guessed it) Tea, just about every game, craft or club you could think of. Tiggy was trying to find her thing. A thing where she could shine. A thing where she could be the best. The others in her class all seemed to have a thing. Bina Bunny was the best thumping bass

player in the band, Octavia with her eighth tentacles could knit a matching scarf, hat and gloves, at the same time. Joey could jump hurdles, Fido could fetch footballs, why even Stuart who was so little, was amazing in the maze thing.

As she thought of all the things that weren't her thing, a sad smile stretched across her face, a combination of hope and not so much hope. Mr Usher noticed, 'Tiggy is everything alright?' he asked. Tiggy forced her smile into what looked like an entirely hope smile and said, 'Yes sir, I'm just thinking about what one thing will be my thing.'

'You seem to have a lot to keep you busy. Aren't any of those things, your thing?' Tiggy really did entirely hope that was true. 'Why don't you pick your favourite ones and make them your thing,' Mr Usher said kindly and he really cared but totally did not understand. You can't just pick your favourite thing, the one you enjoy most, if that were the case then she'd be the best trampolining, cloning, territorial warrior the spelling bee had ever seen.

Lunch break rang out, and although Tiggy was very busy, she always found time to go to the library. There she could get lost imagining all the things that could be her thing. The librarian was used to seeing Tiggy rush in and rush out but hadn't seen her rushing in a while.

'How are you Tiggy?' Miss Bronte asked. 'I'm fine and dandy miss, just fine and dandy,' Tiggy said in the most unconvincing way. Miss Bronte sat down beside her. She had to be a whisper away with the big 'shhhh' signs she herself had plastered around the library. 'Well, you don't have to be,' Miss Bronte said. 'Sometimes I'm not dandy at all, and that's just fine.'

Tiggy knew exactly what she meant and relaxed a little into her shell, physically, not emotionally. 'I'm trying to find my thing, my 'I can be the best' thing,' Tiggy confessed. 'I see,' Miss Bronte replied. 'You do know that you don't have to be the best at a thing for it to be your thing.'

Tiggy smiled, she always liked her time with Miss Bronte, even when she sat silently at her desk. Something about her was so calm. She was never in a rush but always managed to get things done.

'How do you do it?' Tiggy didn't mean to ask out loud. 'Do what?'

'Oh, um, well, how do you get so much done but never seem to rush?'

'Well, that's because when I'm out here, I'm completely here not thinking about all that awaits me in the store room,' the librarian shared, then went back to her silent desk.

Tiggy thought Miss Bronte was as sweet as butterscotch but obviously couldn't remember what it was like to be in 6th grade and not have one thing, not one where you could be the best, maybe with all that being completely here she forgot all about what happened way back then. The bell before the bell rang, so Tiggy gathered up all the books she'd collected and took them to Miss Bronte's 'silent except for the beep' desk to check out.

'How to Succeed in 6th Grade without Really Trying [beep]

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Hares [beep]

The Power of Wow [beep]

The Porpoise Driven Life' [beep]

'I hope you find what you're looking for,' Miss Bronte added to the list, not another book just her most genuine wishes.

Tiggy's backpack was bulging as she made her way home that day. She only managed to reach her Uncle Tom's house before collapsing under the weight. Uncle Tom was known by all the tortoises around town as the one who ran without his shell from one side of the pizza place to the other. Some kind of dare he wouldn't dare to repeat these days. 'Hi there Tigs, thanks for dropping by,' Uncle Tom said sarcastically as Tiggy had actually dropped to the ground on his pavement. Sarcastic but sincere, Uncle Tom helped Tiggy pick up all the self help books that spewed from her backpack.

'Looks like you're on a mission Tigs,' said Uncle Tom. 'Just a bit of research,' she quickly replied as she stuffed them back into her bag and zipped them all out of sight.

'I remember being in sixth grade,' Uncle Tom said and Tiggy didn't believe. 'It was a tough year, we were the oldest on campus, somewhere between little and big. I was bored of being there and scared of going there. It was hard finding my way.'

'What was your thing when you were my age?' Tiggy asked, starting to believe him.

'Well that depends on what you mean exactly?'

'What I mean exactly is, what thing did you do where you were the best doing it?' said Tiggy.

'Nothing. I was the third best at marbles, the fourth best at math and no where near the best at bowling, but I loved bowling. Met some of my best friends there, do you realise that bowling,' on his third mention of bowling, he'd lost Tiggy entirely so he jumped back on course, 'I wasn't the best at anything Tiggy, not one thing.'

Tiggy was shocked and confused. How was this possible? Uncle Tom was the best in his field, people hired him to fly all over the world to do what he did, Tiggy wasn't quite sure what he did. But he lived in a big fancy house, drove a big fancy car and had a big fancy moustache, all the signs of being the best a tortoise can be.

'If you weren't the best then, how are you the best now?' Tiggy asked. 'Cause I found what I like to do and kept on doing it.'

'As simple as that, Mr Usher was right! I can just pick my favourites. Miss Bronte too! I don't have to be the best!' Tiggy was dizzy, all this rethinking was going to take some getting used to. Lucky for her, it was the weekend.

And on Monday morning Tiggy returned to school with a plan, by the end of the week she picked out her favourites, by the end of the month she was having loads more fun and lots more time, and by the end of the year she was the 2nd best mimic, the 6th best mime and the very best twirling her baton at the back of the marching band.

The End

Nanny Bea: Oh, thank you Jules. I simply adore watching a tortoise twirl a baton.

Jules: I adore watching a tortoise do anything.

Nanny Bea: Oh they are so productive. Don't let their slow steady movement fool you. Why inside those shells is a hive of activity. Ants, termites, bees. At any given time, there could be an entire convention carrying on inside their shells. One year I was a keynote speaker in fact.

Jules: Inside a tortoise shell?

Nanny Bea: Of course not, I couldn't possibly fit in there. I gave my speech over zoom and they watched me remotely. Tortoises are known to get fabulous internet speeds as they can move into the most advantageous location.

Jules: Well I'll never look at a tortoise the same way again.

Nanny Bea: Indeed! But will you come back again with another story?

Jules: Of course. I'll be back next week for more Tales and Tea.

Thomas: Go to NannyBea.com

Jules: Go there to find out about all our episodes. You can like and follow us on iTunes or Spotify and get in touch if you'd like to be on the show.

[Be on the Show jingle]

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