

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Hello to you and welcome to my cottage I like to call Dave. You've made it in the nick of time, the kettle's boiled and my neighbour Jules will be here any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Oh, there seems to be someone at the door. Hello?

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

Nanny Bea: What a lovely surprise, does this mean you have a new tale for us?

Jules: Yes I do, but first, we have a wonder word...

[wonder word jingle]

Ophelia: Hi, my name's Ophelia and I have a wonder word Nanny Bea, it's whatchamacallit.

[drum roll]

Ophelia: Whatchamacallit is a name for something when you can't remember it's name or don't know it. My dad calls lots of things whatchamacallit but not me he calls me Ophelia. Bye for now.

[piano out]

Jules: A word for when you are wondering, the best kind of wonder word. Make sure to listen out for Ophelia's whatchamacallit. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please.

Jules: Okay then, **Come Sail Away**, adapted for radio

Grandfather's study was a place where one didn't touch a thing, not the globe dangling half cocked, not the stuffed Pigeon, the moose or the fox and most definitely not, decidedly not the smallest of ships adrift in a bottle to the left of the mantelpiece clock. The last grandchild to touch a thing in Grandfather's study was Georgiana and the thing she last touched was the smallest of ships alone and adrift in a fragile and sheer glass bottle.

Prior to the bottle touching incident, Georgie was a perky and to be honest, precocious child, always wanting this and insisting fervently on that. She was 5 days, 4 hours and 2 minutes older than Henry, her uncle's son, and she reminded him of that fact every occasion on which they met. These 'occasions' were often some sort of family celebration or commiseration and frequently held at the aforementioned grandfather's house. Now in a house with few options, one could be excused or at least understood for entering Grandfather's sacred study but in a house as large as Grandiose Gables, there was no excuse. At this sprawling estate one could explore the billiard room, the butterfly enclosure, the badminton court. One could find their way to the indoor pool, the outdoor theatre and the underground bunker. One could get lost in the maze, read books in the library for days or simply wander round the dining hall and perpetually graze.

There was no excuse, no possible reason for one to enter Grandfather's study, except of course to relent to it's call. For all who passed by and were of limited age, the study would almost whisper to them, 'Come, come in, come in and see'. Nobody knew the cut off age precisely but by the time grandchildren reached double digits, they had no recollection of ever being beckoned by the study at all. One can only assume that perhaps the larger the being, the lesser their capacity to hear the call. But that theory is entirely debunked by Great Auntie Jean who thought the rumors to be nonsense until she herself became confined to a wheelchair then was quite often found in the study but not chastised of course given her considerable years and frequent outbursts. Auntie Jean would just as easily shout you down to your britches as she would build you up with her praises. Auntie Jean was left to wander as she pleased without consequence.

The same could not be said for the grandchildren or any other guests for that matter.

Since Georgie's bottle touching incident, she took care to avoid the hall to which the study opened out, as well as the garden path the study windows peered across, or even the guest room above the study come to think of it. She was once issued that guest room when visiting and begged most urgently to be relocated to a room, any room other than that one, opting to sleep in the stables with the stallions when all the others were occupied.

Since Georgie's bottle touching incident, she no longer taunted Henry with her superior age. She said more thank you's and frequent pleases. At the dinner table she'd dabbed her napkin and closed her lips. Often at these formal family occasions, she just smiled and nodded until the meal was done.

Henry missed their sparring, he missed her spirited ways and knew exactly when she became this prim and proper, purveyor of parties, the visit after the visit when she touched the bottle, but never again.

One would think this first hand witness to the perils of the study would serve as a warning to young Henry, but they did not. Instead they made him itch, the sort of itch that must be scratched, and scratched by means of entering the ever beckoning grandfather's study.

Henry was a bright lad so timed his exploit with the utmost care. He waited until the adults were preparing for dinner, distracted by an activity that rivaled a full theatre production. Will

you bring one thing and I'll grab the other. Where are the fish forks, has anyone seen Mother? While they were busy looking for this and searching for that, Henry could remove himself, without prying eyes or interested bodies.

He made his way down the hall, and soon heard that familiar whisper. His itch he soon would scratch. He ever so quietly but definitely deliberately placed his hand upon the knob and turned. The door almost opened itself for him and with one, then two feet across the threshold Henry was disappointed to find the itch still itching and the whisper still whispering. In fact the whisper intensified like a rush of waves on the shore, prodding him, 'Come, come closer, come closer and see.' Henry knew his time was limited, as was the adults' preoccupation but the chorus urged him to draw closer. 'Come, come closer, come closer and see,' by now it was nearly shouting, surely the others would hear this, his silent walking and precision planning would all be in vain if he were to be caught and questioned on his intent. He told himself he was moving closer to avoid this interrogation but was not entirely certain which was more tempting, avoiding detection or drawing nearer to the beckoning. It did not matter, either way, Henry was pulled in and found himself by the mantle clock looking deep into the ship adrift in the glass bottle sea. The more he looked, the more curious he became. How was it that a ship of that size could enter such a small opening and envelop the hole of the bottle's belly? Did it shrink and then grow? Was the glass made around it? Did little tiny men with little tiny hammers build it deep inside?

As he posed these questions, Henry found himself drawing closer and closer still. He saw the ship in detail, the mainmast, the foremast, the mizzenmast and the others. Masts abound upon the SS Whatchamacallit. Then there's the bowsprit and the flying jib boom. Make up a name, they are bound to have something akin to it aboard this mighty vessel. Henry tried to take it all in when out of the corner of his eye he thought, no he was certain he saw something move. A small fleck no larger than a flea. He turned and peered and pinched his eyes until he could see for certain. This fleck was not that of a flea, it was that of a man, a man dressed in the most peculiar attire. He wore trousers cut at the knees or were they a skirt or perhaps a flowing pair of trousers. Either way, he wore them. Upon his head laid a cap of sorts much like an overstretched sock tied and tasseled on the end. He ran about at such a pace, shouting urgent pleas Henry could not quite make out. With his pleading came a response of such force Henry was literally taken aback, men, what must have been one hundred, perhaps as many as three, came spilling onto the deck with such purpose. They soon took to their stations of activity, hoisting, jibing and lashing. Henry wasn't certain what came first, the bombastic activity of the crew or the violent crashing of the waves. But the waves seem to have the advantage, rising up engulfing the entirety of the ship as though it were nothing more than a boat one's meant to row. With each slap of the waves, the men held on tighter, committed to their task, unthwarted from their efforts until the captain, he must have been the captain with his hat sitting proudly on his head and his chest gleaming with medals of silver and gold. The captain called out to his men to stand firm and hold tight to their stations. He could see the wave that few survive, the wave that splits ships in two heading their way and in a blink it hit as though the ones before were a separate species. This wave, the wave as it deserves such distinction, ripped and stripped the SS Whatchamacallit to its skeleton. What was left could barely be described as a ship and as for the men...

Just that moment a voice called from behind, ' You aren't touching anything are you?' Henry turned to see his formidable grandfather filling the doorway. But how could he explain, in truth he did not touch a thing but in reality the ship, once whole was now in pieces.

'Grandfather, I'm ever so sorry,' Henry said.

'Whatever for my boy?'

'I didn't touch a thing, I promise, but, but,'

'One butt's a rifle, two butts is a war.'

Henry couldn't find the words so he just stepped aside and motioned to what knew to be behind him, the smallest of ships that was no longer adrift but in pieces on the bottom of a bottle.

'Yes, fine vessel the SS Whatchamacallit, she's given me years of pleasures untold.'

Henry thought this an odd response when his grandfather's clearly prized possession was quite obviously mangled and broken beyond...Henry turned to look and saw the Whatchamacallit in immaculate condition, untouched by the wave, untouched by the boy.

'But it was...'

'It was as it always is, pleasures untold.'

Henry understood and returned to the now prepared table where he dabbed his napkin and closed his lips, speaking nothing of the smallest of ships alone and adrift in a fragile and sheer glass bottle.

The End

Nanny Bea: Oh thank you Jules. What an extraordinary tale!

Jules: One that even surprised you Nanny Bea?

Nanny Bea: Most definitely. I have never seen a smallest of ships alone and adrift in a fragile and sheer glass bottle with a seaman, with a tassel on his hat. How very extraordinary.

Jules: The tassel was the surprising part?

Nanny Bea: Why yes, just imagine the other crew members' response, there would be mutiny as each one would insist on their very own tassel.

Jules: I think I can imagine. Well maybe I'll have more surprises for you when I come back next week.

Thomas: Go to [NannyBea.com](http://NannyBea.com)

Jules: Go there to find out about all our stories and how you can take part in the show like the epic Ophelia. Make sure to like or follow us on iTunes or Spotify to get a reminder and come back next week for more Tales and Tea.

[Be on the Show jingle]

Mr Announcer: This has been a Toad in the Hole production for [NannyBea.com](http://NannyBea.com).