

Bruce the Moose Got Loose...Again!

by Jules de Jongh  
Season 2 Episode 35

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Hello and welcome, the tea is brewed and my neighbour Jules will bring us a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Is that my door knocking?

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

Nanny Bea: No, it wasn't my door knocking it was you! Of course it was, do come in dear.

Jules: Why thank you Nanny Bea. We have a wild story today of an unexpected but most appreciated surprise visitor. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please.

Jules: Okay then, **Bruce the Moose Got Loose...Again!**, adapted for radio

No one is quite sure exactly where Bruce came from but they most certainly know when. It was the summer of 2016. The Fairbank Animal (and Pumpkin) Farm was getting ready for their busiest season, when they open to the public just once a year with their wagon rides and duck races, pumpkin patches and amazing Maise Mazes. Mama hen had just hatched her biggest batch of baby chicks all yellow and fluffy when she got up and left. At first they thought she was stuck in the maise maze, folks were known to get stuck in there for days but then they found in the hen hut a receipt for a one way ticket to Las Vegas, and everyone knew she always dreamt of being a showgirl in Vegas. The thing is, there were so many baby animals to look after, the piglets and ducklings, the kittens, the goslings. The Fairbank family was running at full speed. They didn't know how they were going to look after the chicks as well, without Mama hen. This was a major worry for Grandpa Dave as he explained to the family around the supper table. 'Who's gonna protect those chicks and keep them warm. Who'll teach them how to eat and drink and scratch for food?' There were lots of offers of help but from family, who had no time left to offer. And that's when there was a, 'Thu gunk, thu gunk, thu gunk,' at the kitchen door. Now normally the top half of the door was flung wide open, especially as Grandma J had a tendency to cook cajun style, if you know what I mean? You don't? Oh well I mean she could, on occasion, cook things really well done, like charcoal in fact. The door open policy meant the smoke that set off what became the dinner bell or as

others might call it, the smoke alarm, it would ring on forever unless the offending smoke could escape out the back door. But tonight was particularly wet, with sideways rain that was pointing directly into the kitchen, so the door remained firmly and completely shut. That is why the unexpected visitor had to knock instead of hollar. Little Lucy popped up from the table, any excuse not to eat her purple still sprouting broccoli. She opened the door, forgetting to ask who's there which probably wouldn't of helped much as, the 'who' didn't speak English, he only spoke Moose but he understood it alright. When Lucy opened the door Bruce introduced himself the best he could, explained that he had come to look after the chicks and would get to work straight away. By then Lucy was surrounded by the other 7 grandchildren, 4 children and 2 farmers. They listened attentively but unlike Bruce, they didn't understand a word of it. He then walked over to the barn, into the chick pen then laid on the ground and huddled the cold chicks around him. Now usually when a strange moose arrives at your back door and offers to take the place of your Mama hen who was on a bus to Vegas, people would say no but there was something about Bruce's manor, his tender eyes and gentle ways that made the Fairbanks think otherwise. 'Looks like we've got a new mama hen,' little Lucy said and the rest of the family agreed.

But Bruce wasn't your typical moose turned mama hen, he didn't just protect them and teach them to eat and drink. He taught them the classics like Shakespeare and Dickens, he taught them how to sing Opera and how to breakdance. He had no limits to his idea of culture. These little chicks grew into the most accomplished chickens and when people came to the farm for their one month a year opening, he'd pose for photos, smiling even. He offered pony rides, I mean literally giving ponies with people on them rides. He joined the knitting circle with his antlers holding the yarn. He even found his way through the maze whenever anyone got lost. The Fairbank Animal and Pumpkin Farm was busier than ever with Bruce as their newest resident. And Bruce was a happy moose. He stayed on after the visitors left. He helped with the Christmas lights, carried the Easter baskets, and basically became an essential part of the family. They thought he'd stay forever, that was until the 4th of July 2017. The morning of the 4th little Lucy headed out for her morning Bruce cuddle, to find Bruce was no longer there. She cried all day until the 5th of July when she got up to see Bruce back in the barn. And he stayed in that barn, well on that farm all through the pumpkin patch period, beyond the Christmas tree trimming season, over the Easter egg episode until the very next year on the 4th of July when Bruce went missing again.

This happened year after year and none of the family ever asked him where he went. They felt like he deserved a break, he deserved the privacy so they took to leaving the barn door open for him on the 4th of July with a sack of oats and a sports drink, they weren't too sure how active his adventure was but wanted him to be equipped. It wasn't until the 4th of July 2021 when now not so little anymore Lucy was working a summer job at the Tukwila Family Fun Center and Bullwinkle's Restaurant. She'd been waitressing there for a few weeks now and had heard a lot about their 4th of July celebrations. They'd all come in costume as their favourite president. Lincoln was the most popular or at least the most identifiable, that was until Trump. Lucy being a newcomer, played it safe and went as President Washington, given she lived in Washington state. Surprisingly she was the only one. They had all got there early as the Fun Center had lots going on, they had the usual bowling and putting, batting and bumping activities as well as the kidopolis sling shot screamin' swing and virtual reality

challenge. All that plus fireworks as soon as the sun went down but none of it was as big a draw as the photo booth with Bullwinkle himself. That all started back in the summer of 2017. Debbie was the manager back then and that 4th of July was her first at the center. She wanted to make a big impact so hired a Bullwinkle costume, full sized and a young man, half sized to wear it all day in her new photo booth. Well I'm not sure if it was the itchy costume or the cramped photo booth but this young man bailed right before opening. Debbie was nearly in tears, not knowing what to do. She'd advertised a Bullwinkle photo booth but had no Bullwinkle to fill it. She tried to juggle the schedule, called every former staff member she knew but just couldn't find anyone to help. She even tried to put the costume on herself and run the cotton candy stand at the same time, it was a disaster, candy all over the costume and costume all over the candy. Debbie was out of ideas when at her office door she heard a 'Thu gunk, thu gunk, thu gunk,'. Now normally she had an open door policy but today she was so frantic and fraught calling anyone she could think of that she'd shut the door behind her. Debbie opened the door to find Bruce, her moose in shining armor! Or even better, the best darned moose suit she'd ever seen. Bruce just smiled, by now he'd realised how few people could understand moose. Debbie showed him to the booth and he spent the rest of the day smiling. And every year after that, Bruce showed up at the Tukwila Family Fun Center and Bullwinkle's Restaurant on the 4th of July to smile with the patrons in the Bullwinkle photo booth. No one ever guessing, he was a great moose not someone in a great moose costume. When not so little anymore Lucy arrived dressed as President George Washington she stopped at Bruce's photo booth. The two of them looked each other over, smiled and carried on with the not so little anymore Lucy happy to see the Moose named Bruce out on the loose, again.

The End

Nanny Bea: Why thank you Jules. And thank you Bruce. I spent the summer of 2019 in Seattle Washington when I was touring with Blondie at the Bumbershoot festival. Arriving there early meant I could fit in some scuba diving and take part in the milk carton derby.

Jules: What a summer! And what on earth is a milk carton derby?

Nanny Bea: It's a collection of boats made from cartons of milk. Best to drink the milk first.

Jules: That could be a story seed, hmmm. Something to think about until next week when I return.

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

Jules: Go there to find out about all our stories. And make sure to like or follow us on iTunes or Spotify to get a reminder. See you 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).