

The Last Gnome  
Standing  
by Jules de Jongh  
Season 2 Episode 39

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Oh what a glorious day it is, all the more so with you here. And you've come at the most perfect time, the tea is ready and my neighbour Jules will be here with a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Is that my door? There seems to be somebody at it. Hello?

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

Nanny Bea: How delightful. Come in dear, come, come.

Jules: Thank you Nanny Bea. I've got a tale for you from waaaay back when. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please.

Jules: Okay then, **The Last Gnome Standing**, adapted for radio

A little man can make a big impact and no one more so than Lampy. Nearly 200 years ago, when we used horses instead of cars and posted letters instead of memes, Lampy was minding his own business in the lush German countryside when a Lord came to town, not 'the' Lord but 'a' Lord, Sir Charles in fact. He had a sprawling estate in England but often took to visiting the continent to enjoy another way of eating, another way of being. It was on such an occasion that he came upon Lampy, a little gnome of baked clay, with a wobbly white beard, blue dungarees done up tight and a bright red hat with shirt sleeves to match. Lampy was doing what he usually did, standing under a large oak tree amongst the ferns and daffodils. He was a cheery fellow, a little mischievous but ever so helpful. He and his friends watched over the garden day and night. It was on such a night that Sir Charles took sight of Lampy in all his glory. At once he wanted Lampy to move back to England with him. Lampy was heartbroken to leave all his friends behind, Sir Charles could clearly see, so an order was given and the packing began of Lampy and his 20 gnome friends.

You might think 20 a large number but gnomes are very sociable. They prefer to stand guard together, the more the merrier. If every gardener was as attuned to the gnome's feelings as

Sir Charles, they would know full well to never, and I mean ever, leave a garden gnome alone. Left alone they become sad and then mad and then bad. And no one wants a bad gnome outside their home.

The journey from Germany to England was a bumpy one, then a rolling one, then a swerving one. Lampy was never very good at travelling and that is no surprise, garden gnomes are notoriously cart sick and sea sick and train sick. Basically any movement really, that's why they stand so still. After their journey, Lampy and his friends were weary. That is probably why Sir Charles's family could not see the potential delight of filling his rockery with crockery. Oh do forgive me, garden gnomes loathe the term 'crockery', they take great offence being likened to a platter that just lies around letting people eat off of it. Garden gnomes are very sensitive. They are either joyously happy or dreadfully sad. That is probably why the entirety of England either fell in love with them or despised their presence.

Every other garden across the nation was soon echoing Sir Charles's inclusion by welcoming their own garden gnomes into their rockeries, their flower beds and pond surrounds. Usually placed in the front garden so all those who despised their presence could be fully aware of it.

Lampy and his friends were celebrities as an ensemble but no one could identify them individually so they were afforded all the benefits of fame but none of the pitfalls. That is probably why Lampy remained so grounded. He was always kind and friendly, even when he became chipped and faded. That was until his fall from fame. It wasn't his fault or that of his companions. It was actually a very upsetting affair.

Sir Charles, a lord and great lover of the garden gnome went to join 'the' Lord. After a time of mourning, his daughters descended on the rockery and removed, without haste or due attention, each and every gnome in sight. When I say they, I mean the groundskeepers but at the daughters emphatic instruction. Some of the gnomes were dumped into the rubbish, some were broken into bits to provide drainage in the bottom of a flower pot but some, usually the ones with a twinkle in their eye, found their way into a groundskeeper's bag. Our Lampy was one such garden gnome. He found himself once again a bit weary from his travels but soon perked up at the sight of his new home. It wasn't as grand as the estate but it was as beautiful, the groundskeeper was a good keeper of his own garden and Lumpy stood guard with pride, and 3 other gnomes which is probably why he was so joy filled for most of his time at number 42 Chipper Lane. Some of the other garden gnomes that made it into other homes weren't as fortunate. Their groundskeepers weren't aware of their need for company, and remember what happens to lonely garden gnomes, they became sad, then mad, then bad, and no one, not even a fan of garden gnomes, wants to keep a bad one around. As the gnome population diminished and more gnomes were left alone, people came to despise them more and more. None of them really understanding why the once cheerful gnomes now looked tasteless and dare I say, cheap.

But not Lampy, he was treasured by his groundskeeper, then by the groundskeeper's daughter, then by the daughter's son. Generation after generation left Lampy and his friends in the front garden of 42 Chipper Lane and the garden was never invaded by distasteful visitors such as moles or crows or foes in all their time there.

By the third generation, 42 Chipper Lane was sold on. The son of the daughter of the groundskeeper thought he would leave Lampy and his friends behind as they were so happy there. But they weren't happy for long. First there was the new owner's dog, Stanley who took a severe disliking to the gnome with a white hat. He, and I do not use this word lightly, 'hated' anyone in a white hat ever since the milkman trod on his paw given half the chance. Lampy tried reasoning with Stanley but a white hat was a white hat to him, he saw no difference and the white hatted gnome was soon seen no more. But Lampy still had his two other friends and neither sported a white hat, phew. The small children who moved into Chipper Lane loved the gnomes. They would play games with them and move them around. And yes that movement would make them queasy as you probably remember all movement does, hence they stand so very still, but the laughter from the children was worth the pain. That was until the children grew larger and their laughter less enticing. They started using the gnomes as target practice with their sling shot or pellet gun. Sadly only Lampy survived the target phase as he was hidden in the undergrowth, the now not so new owners had lost interest in the garden and let it grow wild. The other two unlucky gnomes were under a pine tree where undergrowth didn't grow. Then one day the new owners brought home a new baby, well that's what they called it. Actually it was a cart with no horse, a motor car. They employed a young lad to pave the entire front garden to accommodate the new family member. Not knowing what to do with the one remaining gnome, the lad placed him in a bag on the doorstep next to the empty milk bottles. Early the next morning, the milk man in his white hat and with his propensity to trod on barking dog's paws saw the bag and mistook it as a gift, given it was nearing Christmas. The milkman took Lampy home with an idea to place him in their garden. Mrs Milkman had other ideas. She, like most of the population had grown to dislike garden gnomes, even the ones with a twinkle in their eye, but she didn't have the heart to throw him away so she tucked him in the attic, behind the clothes that were never going to fit again and their children's artwork from their younger days.

Mr and Mrs milkman stayed in that home until he was no longer a milkman but when they moved they left behind every box, every bag up in the attic. They simply did not remember they were there.

Lampy was alone for not just months but years until one day another new home owner appeared with plans to convert the attic. She found Lampy and saw that twinkle, although faded, still in his eye. Lampy was declared the oldest garden gnome in the land and is worth millions. But that's not why he's so happy. Lampy is on display, back at Lamport Hall, his former home with Sir Charles, and he is never, and I mean not ever alone.

The End

Nanny Bea: Why thank you Jules. And thank you Lampy for bravely pressing on. It is hard to keep your chin up when you are on your own. I myself, would be in a dull shade of blue if it were not for my friends, human and otherwise.

Jules: You do have a full house.

Nanny Bea: Yes with my two squirrels, one kitten and hens I can hypnotise.

Jules: Hypnotising hens, that sounds like another episode of Tales and Tea.

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

Jules: Go there to find out about all our stories. If you like the show, please say so on iTunes or Spotify or even better, tell a friend. 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).