

The Prodigal Penguin
by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode 36

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Hello there and welcome. We have a treat to come. With my tea in hand we just need one more thing, a story and my neighbour Jules will be bringing one any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Oh forgive the interruption. Hello, how may I help you?

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

Nanny Bea: How fortunate we were hoping you would come.

Jules: Why thank you Nanny Bea. And I bring for you today an icy tale all the way from Antarctica. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please.

Jules: Okay then, **The Prodigal Penguin**, adapted for radio

Pax and Percival were born into the good life, with a good father. And not your ordinary father but an Emperor. They had acres of ice shelf in Antarctica with staff to meet their every need. Even the servants of father were treated well. They all had ice cream sundaes each Sunday and frozen yogurt on Fridays. All they could want was theirs. But this ice shelf was wide open, you could leave anytime you wish, father made sure of that. He wanted a real relationship with his family and because of that, they needed the right to make their own choices even if those choices took them away from him.

Percival, the eldest son and a hard working penguin, would never dream of leaving father. He did everything he could to please him, Percival huddled along with the others to keep them all warm, he readily took his turn to move to the outside of the huddle. As he grew, he joined the deep sea dive without complaint, catching a decent number of fish. Percival played his part and asked very little from father. He did think quite highly of himself as a result. 'What a worthy son I am,' he would say to himself each morning as he fluffed his fluffy feathers. He loved his father. I mean how could he not, when he was just an egg, father balanced Percival on his feet for 70 days and kept him warm in a special pouch while their mother was fishing.

Pax was the youngest and let Percival be the star. Pax was more interested in having fun than pulling his weight. He played when Percival worked. He sucked up any ice cream he could get his flippers on and was always on the look out for a sliding opportunity. Pax loved to slide. He didn't think much about how he felt about his father or anyone else for that matter. Pax was focused on one thing, and that thing was Pax. One day he got an idea. Pax knew his father had great wealth and someday, when his father was no longer alive, that wealth would be his but someday wasn't coming fast enough so Pax went to his father and said, 'Pop's how about you give me my inheritance now, while I can enjoy it?' Father was wounded but remember he wanted a real relationship so he didn't hang onto Pax, 'Everything I have is already yours Pax, you may take your share anytime you like.' Well Pax didn't need to hear that twice, he grabbed his inheritance and headed off into the wild.

Percival watched as his brother slid off. He was furious with his father for letting Pax get away with such an insulting request. It was like Pax was wishing his father to die. Percival was fuming and hoped never to see Pax again.

Pax had no idea, he just slipped away to the life he'd dreamed of, with ice cream every day and slides that slid for miles. Pax didn't want any limits on his fun. And boy did he have fun. One day he ate an ice cream sundae for breakfast, a frozen yogurt for lunch and both again for dinner. In all honesty, he did feel a bit sick after that. But he bounced back and bounced on down the transantarctic mountains, across the Weddel sea until he came to Deception Island, a massive subglacial volcano, buried under layers of ice but still bubbling away. It was the place all the penguins went to indulge themselves. They never seemed to sleep, had sliding parties throughout the night. It was wild and costly. Pax didn't even think about how much he was spending, but soon his pockets were empty. No more sliding, no more ice cream, reality was hitting Pax and hitting him hard. 'I'm so hungry, I'm so tired, if only I could have a place to sleep and a plate to eat.' He wandered for days until he saw a sign in the little known, rarely seen arctic Pizza station. They needed someone to wash the dishes, a job one of his father's servants would do but Pax was desperate. He got the job but still didn't have enough to eat so while he was washing up, he'd lick the smear of ice cream off a client's bowl or suck a drip of yogurt off a dirty spoon. One day Pax saw his reflection in the faucet. He looked worn out, stick thin and hopeless. 'Why my father's servants eat better than I do. I should go now, back to my father's house and beg him to let me become his servant,' Pax said as he dropped his washing up brush and headed back home.

It was a long and weary journey and with nowhere to sleep and nothing to eat. As he came back down the transantarctic mountains, only a spec in the distance, his father recognized him at once. 'My son!' he shouted, and penguins in father's position never shouted. 'My son has returned!' he shouted again but then he did something even more shocking, he ran, penguins in father's position never, ever ran. Percival and the entire staff saw this undignified display. Percival was embarrassed until the servants started chatting, 'He's back,' 'Pax is coming home,' 'The Prodigal Penguin has returned.' Percival still never wanted to see his brother again so he made sure that he didn't.

Father was still running and shouting. Pax was nervous, 'Oh no, what is he going to do to me, he must be so angry.' But then he was surprised as his father embraced him and kissed him over and over again. 'Come my son, we will build you a mountain of a sundae, a bottomless frozen yogurt bar.'

'No father, I don't deserve it. I've just come back to be your servant and even that is more than you should offer me.'

'I will hear nothing of that. You are and always will be my son. Today we celebrate because once you were lost and now you are found.'

Pax cried. He didn't know what to say. How could his father be so generous? But that is how much his father loves him.

This could of been, it should've been the end of the story, but it wasn't. While everyone was celebrating Pax's return, Percival was fuming on a block of ice. After a while, father came looking for him. 'Why Percival there you are. Your long lost brother has returned, come join the festivities.'

'There is nothing to be festive about. I wish he was still lost and never returned.'

This shocked his father, 'Why are you so angry?'

'It's not fair. I've always done the right thing, I huddled and I fished. But you've never made me a sundae on a Monday, you've never celebrated me.'

Father was sad to his core, 'My dear and faithful son, all that I have is and always has been yours. Never have you been out of my care. But your brother, he was lost and now he's found. I will forever celebrate.'

Percival didn't fully understand but he did love his father and found a way to forgive his brother after eating his way through the mountain of a sundae.

The End

Nanny Bea: Why thank you Jules. I once skied down an ice cream sundae mountain. It was very sticky.

Jules: I bet it was.

Nanny Bea: If you return next week, I will celebrate with a mole hill of a sundae, I don't have a bowl big enough for a mountain.

Jules: That sounds delightful.

Thomas: Go to 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.