

The Sky is Falling
by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode 40

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Hello! I'm so glad you've come, I've just settled down with a cuppa and my neighbour Jules will be here with a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Who ever could that be? Hello, who is it?

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

Nanny Bea: As if she knew we were ready. Hello dear.

Jules: Hi Nanny Bea. I've brought you a feather flapping tale. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please.

Jules: Okay then, **The Sky is Falling**, adapted for radio

Penny and her friends were just clucking around, things had been quiet since all the chicks went back to school, that was until Rita ran squawking in, 'Have you heard the news today?' Rita liked to keep up with the latest but even more liked knowing the latest before any others could keep up. 'Well,' she said in her 'you won't believe it' kind of way. 'Traffic is stacked up for miles! I had to drive all through the back roads just to get here.' This news was news to Penny and she started to wonder, 'If the roads are blocked, how will the trucks get through, and if the trucks can't get through how will we have enough corn and if we don't have enough corn who will make the cornbread for the children's chilli cookoff!' That's their annual autumn fundraiser for the school and to be honest in the chicken community chilli wasn't much of a draw, they all came to the event for the cornbread. Her friends didn't take much convincing and in unison, all the girls waddled off to stock up on corn. They went from one shop to another, emptying all the shelves. The other hens who arrived after them found not a kernel of corn in town. Any cornbread making was going to be limited to Penny and her friends, the others would just have to do without.

It was only a few days later when Penny started on her cornbread with her special whipped honey butter. The whole hen house smelled heavenly. Penny did make a few extra trays for the family. You could sniff the trail a mile off, making all those who couldn't buy corn, even

more eager to make it to the children's chili cookoff. Penny's smallest of chicks was pecking at her heels in hopes of a few stray crumbs. And how can you resist a bright yellow ball of fluff looking up at you. Penny relented and gave Sweetpea, that's what she called her ball of fluff, a piece of cornbread all buttered up. Sweetpea finished before her brother came in, fortunately as he could eat his weight in cornbread. 'Hello mother,' he said to Penny. 'Why Sunshine,' that's what she called him even in front of his friends, 'how come you're home so early.'

She seemed a bit concerned but he was not, 'They closed school early today.' That was out of the ordinary and got Penny wondering, 'If they close school today, they could close school tomorrow and the next day and the next. Then how would my chicks get an education and how would they get a good job?' Penny turned her wonder to worry. What could she do, her chicks may be small now but someday they'd be big and they'd need a job so she signed one up to join the army, one to join the church and one to join the circus. 'But I don't want to be a clown!' Sweetpea cried and she really cried as she found clowns kind of scary. After such a response, Penny thought she'd save telling her other children for another time.

The children's chili cookoff was only a few hours from now, so Penny loaded up her car in good time. She had a great many cornbreads to bring as she and her friends were the only ones who could make it, given they had bought up all the cornmeal in town. She filled her car with cornbread stacked up to the ceiling, and had to tie the chicks to the roof. Sweetpea was still crying about her future as a clown. By the time they reached the cookoff, she had told the other chicks about the futures their mother had signed them up for, assuming Sunshine would be in the army and Skittle would be in the church. I do believe Penny had put them the other way around given Sunshine's fear of all things that bang and Skittle's dislike for bells, smells and silence. Either way, neither chick was pleased and started protesting, rather loudly. 'But I want to be an astronaut!' 'And I want to be a bumblebee!' they both declared. Penny had hoped they would help her carry the cornbread but all three chicks were in such fits of distress they were no use to any hen. Penny tried to console them as she took the cornbread in batches. On her first trip she tumbled with the cornbread tucked under each wing. On the second trip, she dropped the top three tins but couldn't risk stopping to collect them. On her third trip, she tripped over the batch she had dropped. The cornbread tins she had in her wings, flew up into the air and came back down, upside down. Penny took the ones off the top of the pile as they were still clean although crumbly. With only half the cornbread she'd baked and no chicks to help, Penny manned the stall ready for the first customer.

There were no tins of cornbread from her friends though. Normally she would phone all the cornbread bakers the day before the children's chili cookoff to make sure they were baked and packed and stacked up to deliver but this year with all the extra she had to make there was no time to remind, any hen. She later found out that one got stuck in traffic, one got totally distracted, one couldn't help but eat them all and the other had forgotten and was shopping at the mall.

What a disaster Penny thought, how could it get any worse, but it did. Penny with her three crying chicks and mangled and missing cornbread was at the end of her tether when one

singular acorn fell from the tree above, hitting Penny on the head. She looked up and saw the leaves of the mighty oak swaying in the wind. She skipped wondering and went straight to worrying, 'What if the wind blows so hard it knocks the entire tree from the sky, and what if the tree that reaches so high pulls down the clouds that hold up the sky, then the sky would fall down all around!' Penny became so hysterical that her chicks calmed down and watched, they watched her run around like a headless chicken, they watched her grab the mayor's megaphone and they watched her shout out to the entire chicken community, 'The sky is falling! The sky is falling! The sky is falling,' The other chickens went silent...then they roared with laughter, they hooted, they hollard. Penny was beside herself, she ran to her chicks and gathered them under her wings, 'The sky is falling, actually falling, we've gotta hide.' Her chicks joined in the laughter,, 'Oh Mommy!' said Sweetpea, 'we all know the sky can't fall, because there is nothing to fall, what we see and call the sky is simply a reflection of the sun's rays on a belt of air.' 'Really?' Penny asked. 'Really,' her chicks replied. Maybe a clown's life isn't for Sweetpea after all, thought Penny.

And from that day forward the entire chicken community learned to appreciate the finer qualities of a good chili without cornbread and Penny learned how to chill, just a little bit.

The End

Nanny Bea: Why thank you Jules. I do feel for that mother hen. I myself have been hit from an object falling from the sky, it wasn't an acorn just a meteorite.

Jules: Really, did it hurt?

Nanny Bea: Only after I regained consciousness but I did find a significant improvement in my mandarin appreciation.

Jules: You speak Mandarin?

Nanny Bea: No, I eat them.

Jules: Well, we do have a lot of listening friends who speak Mandarin and Moldavian, Farsi and Francais. Tales and Tea goes all over the globe.

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.