

There's a Mouse in the
House of God
by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode 41

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Oh hello! The tea is ready, are you? My neighbour Jules will be here with a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: It seems someone is at my door? Who is it?

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

Nanny Bea: Really? What a delightful surprise! Come in dear.

Jules: Why thank you Nanny Bea. I've brought you a squeaky tale this week. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please.

Jules: Okay then, **There's a Mouse in the House of God**, adapted for radio

Living in a hole in the wall might seem dreary, unless of course you're in a hole in a wall at the church of Saint Bruno, Basil and Boris. St B's, as the parishioners call it, is glorious with matt silver spires reaching for the sky and windows stained crimson, purple and gold. On Sundays, and most of the Mondays, when the choir rehearses for Sundays, St B's echoes with voices, bouncing off the stone walls and rumbling you to your bones. It's like heaven itself has opened up and a choir of angels are calling you in. But every other day, on Tuesday, Wednesday, oh you know the rest, St B's is startlingly quiet. You really can hear a pin drop, not that many do, I mean why would someone be walking around with a pin and if they were, what are the chances of them dropping it. Anyway, in the silence of St B's even Squidge, the quietest of church mice tippy toes around. Squidge loves his itty bitty hole in the wall, so doesn't want to attract the attention of the church custodian, Mr Porter who tends to the church building and all its repairs. Mr Porter stops every gap, fills every crack and patches every hole-without warning I might add.

One day Betty and Freddy, a couple of church mice in residence, were merrily popping in and out of their hole in the floor by the font. The very next day Mr Porter stepped in and their hole

was gone, as were they! Squidge took great care when choosing his hole so as not to be so easily spotted. He carved one out of the panelling behind the choir stalls and in the shadows, the tiniest of holes in the shape of a V, to match the design of the paneling.

Our Squidge is a perpetual nibbler but tries to limit his nibble outings to quiet times. In truth he could stay in his hole for an entire month with all the food he's hoarded but as Squidge says, 'More is more,' when it comes to food.

His outings aren't just to feed his appetite though, they are also part of his job as the miniature custodian of Saint Bruno, Basil and Boris's, an invisible (hopefully) assistant to Mr Porter. Squidge clears up communion crumbs, any eager ants and crafty cockroaches. Basically keeping the floors clear for all to fully appreciate their quilt like tiles edging the aisle or the undulating stone slabs worn smooth where so many feet have tread. Squidge considers his lodgings and hunting ground payment in full.

He didn't always live at St B's though. When he was but a mouselette, he and his brothers lived in a family hole in the woods on the outskirts of town. They were such a talented family, still are. As the Moutsetown Five they would put on shows singing songs no mouse had heard the likes of before. They eventually took to touring and it was on such a journey that Squidge was led to his future home.

There were tensions in the brotherly band. The older ones were a bit intimidated by the youngest's talent, that, that's Squidge. They thought he was getting too much attention just because he was so small and cute. That's when Squidge decided to break away and go solo. But a one mouse band is a hard life. He was living on the streets only a few blocks away from paradise that is St B's but he didn't know that then. All Squidge knew was the reality of living in a box, living in a cardboard box behind the pizza shop, dumpster diving for dinner or singing for his supper. The nights were cold and long. Just when Squidge was about to give up hope he heard the bells, like a small still voice, calling out to him, telling him to hold on, love was on it's way but then they'd leave as quickly as they came and he wouldn't hear them again for another week, about the time he'd have lost hope again. One day the bells spoke to him, but this time they said, 'Come to me if you are worn out, let me carry your load.' Squidge was definitely worn out, so much so he was ready to lay down his solo dreams and hand his load over so he started walking towards the bells. They were like a beacon, lighting his way, when he finally reached the church steps the bells changed their tune, they called out, 'In my house there are many rooms, come, come, come.' Squidge looked up to the bell tower, he nearly fell backwards it was so high. There were feet all around him making their way inside. Squidge followed the crowd, taking care not to be stepped on and not to be seen. 'Big people get awfully frightened by such a little me,' Squidge thought, as he'd frightened big people before.

Finally after scaling a mountain of steps each five times his size, he reached the thick oak doors, wide open, funnelling them all in. When Squidge crossed the threshold, he felt all at once completely loved, and totally home. Squidge slipped in beneath a child's buggy and made his way underneath the nearest pew. Then as they had done so, so many times before,

the bells stopped. 'It must take a lot of energy to ring,' thought Squidge as they spent the rest of the week resting.

Under the pew he saw feet shifting, standing, kneeling, sitting. All together, like an elaborate dance number somehow they all knew. In between the uppings and downings, Squidge heard mumbles rumbling on and on until there came a mighty roar that seemed to pour out of the tower of pipes racing up the wall. The largest ones were the fastest as they were nearly at the very top, and they sang out the deepest, bellowing without taking a breath. The smallest pipes that had barely got past the starting line had tiny voices, all high and fluttery. Squidge had never heard a choir of pipes before and was convinced nothing could improve on this moment, that was until all the feet stood up again and joined the singing. The big feet sang, the little feet sang all different voices, all at the same time, some would lose their way and some would sing the wrong words but they all seemed to be heading in the same direction. Finally the pipes slowed down to a stoooooop and the feet went back to sitting.

Squidge was buzzing inside, the music still echoing in his ears. 'This is what perfection feels like,' thought Squidge, his tail still tingling. As the mumbling returned, Squidge revelled in this sensation and wondered if he'd ever feel that way again until...the pipes started roaring again and the feet started stirring. The wave of music was coming, again. This time Squidge began to look around and he noticed that at the very front was a group who didn't lose their way or sing the wrong words. They were very busy people, Squidge assumed as, 'they hadn't had time to dress before coming out and are still in their robes'. Conveniently the robes, all of silk, matched almost as if they'd planned it.

When all the uppings and downing, and rumblings and roarings stopped completely, the feet made their way out of the pews and onto the streets, but not Squidge. Nope, Squidge vowed to never leave. That was until Monday arrived and with it a maddening machine growling and sucking up all in its path. The being dragged along behind said machine was none other than Mr Porter. Squidge made his acquaintance straight away as Miss Teafied, someone Squidge later came to know as the church secretary called out to the custodian, 'Oh Mr Porter, Mr Porter?' It was difficult to hear anything over the growling, sucking machine but Miss Teafied has the kind of voice that could cut right through, almost piercing the air itself. 'Yes ma'am, what can I do for you?'

'Oh Mr Porter,' Squidge thought Oh to be a strange first name but he listened all the same as the secretary continued. 'Could you please take care when polishing the choir stalls and polish with less vigor. Last Sunday, our choir member Earl nearly slipped out of his seat while singing, 'He's Got the Whole world in his hands', fortunately Godfrey was there to catch the whole Earl in his hands.'

'Of course Miss Teafied,' Mr Porter replied and Squidge later realised this was the only reply the custodian ever offered the secretary. No questions asked, no resistance given simply another, 'Of course Miss Teafied,' to any of her requests. At this point Squidge had no idea of the church calendar, of the reason why Mr Porter's choir stall polishing was such an urgent matter. As far as he knew, the bells rang on Sundays, and didn't on Mondays. How was he to

know that inside these doors, the voices sang once more on the Mondays, preparing for the Sundays, that is why the busy people still in their robes didn't lose their way or sing the wrong words, they came to practice together. It was after this practice that Squidge knew where he wanted to carve his hole, as close to the robed singers as possible. Each Sunday and subsequent Monday, Squidge would get bolder and bolder, adding his voice to the choir. With his high voice he chose to join the trio of trebles, who were little people singing with the bigger ones. The trebles, Charlotte, Ezra and Thomas, conveniently sat just above the V Squidge had carved in the wall behind the choir stalls. He practiced and he practiced so he could sing along in a glorifying way. The trebles practiced several Mondays without singing on Sundays and Squidge began to wonder why. Finally, the Sunday arrived when the trebles were to join the choir. Squidge was so busy practicing, he didn't have time to change out of his robe. He eagerly awaited the trebles arrival, first came Charlotte, or Lotti the other trebles would call her but they couldn't as they didn't come at all. Lotti became very distressed, 'I can't sing without the others,' she said over and over again. Squidge wanted to shout up to her, 'I'm here, I'm always with you!' But how could he shout that loud. Once the service started, Lotti stopped saying, 'I can't sing without the others,' but she kept thinking it. After the opening mumbling rumblings, it was time. You could tell because the choir stood and the pipes racing to the ceiling roared. Well they all stood except Lotti, she was so frightened, she stayed in her seat. Squidge had to do something, so he did what a church mouse should never do, especially on a Sunday with hundreds of pairs of eyes able to spot him. Squidge came out from the shadows and scurried up the choir stall right alongside Lotti's ear. The time for her to sing was coming so Squidge shouted in his loudest voice, 'I'm here! I'm always with you!' Lotti lifted her head and felt a ray of hope, maybe she wasn't alone. The time for the treble part was coming, Lotti tried to think of the note but nothing was coming to her, then she thought she heard a little mouse of a voice sing, 'My fear doesn't stand a chance when I'm standing in your love,' Lotti didn't even realise she was already singing along, 'My fear doesn't stand a chance when I'm standing in your love.' And all at once all her fear was gone. She and Squidge sang out to the heavens for all to hear. Everyone was so inspired, no one noticed the little mouse at her side. Squidge managed to slip away back into his hole and sang the rest of the service from there. From that day forward Lotti didn't need reminding, that all she needed, she already had and Squidge went on singing at the top of his voice but from the bottom of the stalls, just outside his hole in the shadows where no one could see he was still in his robe.

The End

Nanny Bea: Why thank you Jules. You know there has been many a choral concert when I've come to rely on my little mouse friends to guide me. They are blessed with perfect pitch.

Jules: Perfect perhaps but so small, how can you hear them?

Nanny Bea: They usually phone me on my wireless bluetooth ear buds, it's very discreet.

Jules: Are they talking to you now?

Nanny Bea: Does it look like they are?

Jules: I, I don't think so.

Nanny Bea: Good. Will you be back next week?

Jules: For more tales and tea of course.

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.