

Mr Grimstone's Garden  
by Jules de Jongh  
Season 2 Episode 44

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Well hello there, you've found your way and in good time too. My cup of tea is in hand, ready for my neighbour Jules who'll be here with a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: There's someone at my door. Who is it?

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

Nanny Bea: What a coincidence, we were waiting for my neighbour Jules with a story.

Jules: Good thing Nanny Bea 'cause I've got quite an exciting then scary, then exciting again tale for you. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please.

Jules: Okay then, **Mr Grimstone's Garden**, adapted for radio

Benny got a new ball. Big deal you're thinking, well it most certainly is. This ball of Benny's is no ordinary ball. It is a prototype direct from the factory, one that could change football forever. With it, you can kick longer, throw farther, dribble faster than ever before. It made its way into Benny's hands via his Uncle Lenny who's friend knew the husband of the mother of the intern working for free at the factory. Okay it wasn't exactly for free. They gave her all the dirtied demo footballs she could want. She didn't want any but smiled and took each one very enthusiastically. Her bedroom closet was bursting until she started giving them away, to Benny's benefit. At breakfast, Benny woke to find Uncle Lenny, always a nice surprise, even nicer when he comes bearing gifts.

'I've got something for you...' Uncle Lenny said in the way Uncle Lenny always says. 'Three guesses,' he added as he always added.

Some people might find this routine painful, Benny found it riveting and put a great deal of thought into his guesses. He did have the benefit of seeing his Uncle holding a bag with the mysterious gift in it which was a big clue but Uncle Lenny had been known to fake him out with extra padding, bulging disceptions and weights, he really liked that one and often loaded

the bag with extra weights like the time he brought in a brick with a pack of Bubble Gum or an old broken iron with tickets to the latest Iron Man film.

Benny examined the bag carefully. Rules were he could look but not touch. 'On one side is smooth without any edges, on the other it's bumpy like bubble wrap,' Uncle Lenny does like his bubble wrap. Benny decided to hedge his bets, one smooth guess, one bumpy and one combined.

'Is it a new cycling helmet with racing stripes and flashing lights?' Uncle Lenny didn't count the details but he encouraged them, still the answer was no.

Time for the bumpy guess, 'Is it two dozen boxes of Kindersurprise those chocolate eggs with toys inside that you have to sneak in from Europe because the US government thinks we won't get it and we'll choke on the toy by mistake?'

'Ooo, no but I like the sound of that,' Uncle Lenny replied.

'Okay, my final answer, bumpy and smooth...that's a tough one...Is it a bowl of oranges so full they're spilling out all over?'

'Eh, eeee,' Uncle Lenny made 'his you got them all wrong' noise. 'And for your consolation prize, you still get the prize!' Benny was so excited, you'd never know they'd done this a thousand times before. He opened the bag, pulled out the suspected bubble wrap and there was a ball. Super snazzy although a bit dirty. Benny put it on the floor and was about to kick it when he heard, 'No playing ball in the house.'

'How does she do that?' Benny and Uncle Lenny stood in awe as Mom, who wasn't anywhere to be seen could still see them, or maybe she had special mother senses. Either way, Benny had to put the ball aside. It was time for school all the same. Uncle Lenny walked with Benny all the way there. This was a treat reserved for him alone. No other adult was allowed to walk him all the way to school for everyone to see, hopefully. Along the way Lenny gave all the details about this ball that could make you kick longer, throw farther, dribble faster than ever before. Benny ran straight to his friends telling them all about it, on their way into school and every opportunity he could. By the end of the day everyone knew about Benny and the ball. His three best friends Maisie, Mitchell and Pete just had to come over to try it.

That afternoon they ran over to Benny's and the playing began. This was not an unusual occurrence, they often played football together in his back garden, the goal was already set up either end so they wouldn't kick a ball into a window by mistake. The furthest goal was placed several feet away from the fence that bordered Mr Grimstone's garden. The last thing they wanted to do was kick a ball over there. It was a spooky place with strange smells and odd goings on. There seemed to be a permanent waft of smoke chugging out of a rickety old shed like a massive beast was contained within but trying not to be. Then there was the garden itself, all overgrown and wild and the bats, I can't forget the bats. Every day at sundown they seeped out of his house like a river of tar blocking what was left of the light in

the sky. No one wanted to go to Mr Grimstone's garden, not even to retrieve the better than ever super snazzy although a bit dirty ball.

There was no delay, they got to playing at once and found, 'You can dribble faster!' And at the first foul, 'You can throw farther,' then unfortunately at the first goal attempt, 'You can kick longer!' And Mitchell did, right into... Mr Grimstone's garden. 'Huh!' they all said shocked and horrified.

'What do we do now?'

'We walk away, what else can we do?'

'But it really is the better than ever ball.'

'Maybe we can build a loooooong arm to reach over and grab it?'

'Maybe we can fit suction cups to your drone?'

'Maybe I can just go to Mr Grimstone to get it?' Pete said and the others went crazy.

'You can't,'

'We couldn't'

'Just imagine,'

'Oh, I'd rather not.'

The remaining trio turned around and noticed. Pete was not part of the conversation. Where had he gone? Not to Mr Grimstone's they all thought at once. Then the panicking exploded and they really did start imagining all the horrors that could await their friend, the beast in the shed, the wild, untamed land, and the bats, what about those bats. They discussed all the options.

Going in after him-but they'd be in danger too.

Calling his mom, any mom-but then they'd be in trouble for his going and their not.

And that was it, all the options, both the options and neither satisfied.

'Oh, I thought of another...we wait,' and that's the one they took. The waiting option. They tried it at least for what felt like forever. They'd wait a few minutes, talk about their options and wait again. And continually look through the knot hole in the fence to see if the ball moved. 'Nope, it's still there,' Benny said over and over and over again. Then Maisie took over the knot hole peeping, 'Has it moved?' they'd ask her but nope and nope and nope. Finally Mitchell took over the peeping. He looked into the knot hole and what did he see but another eye, a grey, wrinkly one staring back at him, 'Ah!' he screamed, the others froze where they stood. Then over the fence came a tuft of wild, scraggly grey hair followed by a grey creased forehead, and those grey wrinkly eyes. The kids didn't say a word. Grimstone broke the silence.

'I've got something of yours,' he said then they saw Pete, little Petey's head rising up over the fence and with it....the rest of his body. Grimstone took the child, lifted him in the air and then violently threw! No, no, no I mean gently tossed Pete onto the trampoline. Pete bounced and flipped. Then the grey man disappeared, they all rushed to the knot in the fence, there wasn't room so two had to find other knots. They could see Mr Grimstone in his wild, untamed back

garden pick up the ball with his feet and toss it in the air, then he kneed it, flicked it, spun around and headed it over the fence and right back into Benny's hands. They stood frozen once again, this time in awe. 'Who is that guy?'

'My mom's old science teacher, and my brother's chemistry tutor,' Pete said as he still bounced.

'But how...'

'Oh yeah, he used to be a defender for Manchester United,' Pete added, still bouncing.

'Weren't you afraid in the wild, untamed garden?'

'Of what, the butterflies or the hedgehogs? His nature garden is full of friendly creatures.'

'How about the beast in the shed?'

'I don't know about any beast, but he has shown me his kiln several times before. I made a mug for mother's day, I moulded it, painted it and fired it, that's what they call it, in his flaming kiln. It came out all shiney.'

'Fine but what about the bats, you can't forget the bats.'

'I forgot the bats. They only come out when the sun goes down. But I've seen his bat boxes. My brother helped make them 'cause bats are running out of places to live.'

The kids ran out of questions and Pete ran out of bouncing so they started playing football again. Given the first opportunity Mitchell kicked the better than ever ball over the fence again, into Mr Grimstone's garden. 'I'll get it,' Mitchell said as he ran off, almost as though he kicked it over the fence on purpose. Now why would he do that I wonder?

The End

Nanny Bea: Why thank you Jules. Mr Grimstone was one of my favourite professional footballers, see I even knitted his football strip, number 275, his lucky number unluckily as it was a pig to knit.

Jules: That is something. I particularly like the matching football boots. Are those knitted as well.

Nanny Bea: Oh that'd be ridiculous, no, they are crocheted, much sturdier for muddy fields.

Jules: I sure will.

Nanny Bea: Will you be here next week for more tales and tea?

Jules: But of course.

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

Jules: Go there to find out about all our stories and how to be on the show with a story seed or a wonder word. Make sure to tell all your friends about us.. 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).