

Cluck's Ticking

By FoxFace

Commissioned by Spacebanana

John is a lazy, procrastinating student who is sent to the prestigious Gallus Dee College, an institution on a remote island off the East Coast. It is hoped that his education will improve there, but John quickly starts to notice strange changes among the staff and student body, changes only he can notice. Can he solve the mystery of Gallus Dee before it is too late?

Clock's Ticking, Part 1: The Hunger

I couldn't believe it when I got the letter of acceptance. I thought for sure that I was destined to be little more than a failure in life; I'd barely managed to skate through high school, and I'd already flunked out of the local college. It was my fault; I was always an introvert. I liked to live in the world of imagination, reading books and playing video games, but that meant I was incapable of getting work in on time.

"You better shape up and get your marks in order John," my old teacher Mr Lowry had said, "or else you'll end up stuck working at a farm in the middle of nowhere for the rest of your life."

For a while, I'd thought he might be right, but then after weeks of applications, and weeks of disappointing looks from my Mom and Dad, finally a letter arrived.

Congratulations, you have been accepted to a placement in Gallus Dee College. We are excited to have you join our young but esteemed institute.

The letter went on, giving more specific details: my dormitory room was prepared already, and the semester would begin in just a week. I couldn't believe it, and neither could my parents, who had longed to be rid of me, much as they loved me. Gallus Dee College had been a hail mary; a place I'd never heard of on the east coast, a new but apparently prestigious university that existed on a secluded island, fully stocked and equipped. It had stormy weather, but the facilities were second-to-none. I had to go.

And so, a week later, I was on the ferry over.

"You're well packed for the journey," the ferryman said. He indicated to my luggage, and I was a little sheepish in response.

"Oh, yeah. I brought a few game consoles. And books. And movies. For relaxation!"

The old man grinned. "Had a bit of trouble keeping up where you were previously?"

I was shocked he could discern that so quickly. “Yeah, I was a little lazy. But I’m going to be a lot more productive from now.”

He smiled, and something about the smile was unsettling.

“Oh, you will be,” he said. “Gallus Dee will make sure of it.”

Finally, we arrived at the island, and I departed onto the dock, where a representative of the school was already waiting for me. She was a slim woman, roughly fifty years of age, with silver hair and thick-rim glasses. She seemed almost to be inspecting me as I approached, looking me up and down. Finally, she smiled.

“Welcome to our little isle, John! I am Dr Elizabeth M. Roe.”

I shook her hand. “Excellent to meet you, Elizabeth.”

“My word, you don’t look a day over eighteen!”

I laughed. “I get that all the time. I promise you, I’m twenty-two years old.”

“And looking to be involved in sustainability practices.”

I smiled. It was lovely that the school staff had such fine attention to details.

“Indeed,” I replied, “agricultural engineering needs to account for a population boom, and the numerous challenges of climate change.”

Her smile lingered. “Fascinating. Well, I promise you that we here at Gallus Dee are committed to making that happen. Let me give you a tour of our island and facilities. Your bags will be taken care of.”

Indeed, they were. A large individual who looked like something out of a Hammer Horror film took my suitcases silently and carted them away. Doctor Roe explained that his name was Mr Ling, and that he was born with a genetic condition that led to his freakishly large stature, hence his robe.

From there, she gave me a tour of the island, which was named Highborn Isle. It was a beautiful location, albeit one used to the storm and the sea. It was surrounded on all sides by cliff-face, bare the docks I had arrived at on the western edge of the island. Great gardens as well as fields covered the northern stretch, protected by cliff-faces that deflected much of the easterly rains. The college itself was large, and incredibly modern. It had all the facilities and more that one could want at an institute of learning: a large dormitory split into male and female wings, a mess hall, a swimming pool, a student gym, a large staff quarters, a stocked cafeteria, a running track, reading nooks, a library, and so forth. It was astonishing, and even more so that the college was able to function where it was, and with so few students; Dr Roe informed me that there were less than four hundred currently.

“Oh, but there will be hundreds more to come,” she said, “as we build our reputation and produce.”

“Produce?”

She turned to me. "Why, the produce of fine minds such as yourself, of course. Here at Gallus Dee, we are believers in the function of individuals that other colleges have been ignorant in refusing. We don't demand that you strictly attend classes or obey the rules. Our curricula is flexible, allowing each student to reach their zenith in their own fashion."

I had to admit, it sounded right up my alley. A good excuse to play videogames and read when I wanted, and not have to socially interact all the time.

"Now, let me show you to your dorms," she said.

I was introduced to the overseer of the male wing: Mr Hardy. I was utterly astonished: by pure coincidence, Mr Hardy was my old geography teacher. I remembered him as lazy and barely qualified, often handing out worksheets rather than planning lessons. But he'd always been sharp-witted and likeable, so I shook his hand.

"Mr Hardy!"

"My word, if it isn't John Teeran. What a serendipitous moment! Looks like we both found a place more suited to our own choice of speed in life, huh?"

I smiled. "Look like, sir."

"Thatta boy. Let me show you to your room."

He and I waved farewell to Dr Roe, who it turned out was the head of the college, and who greeted each and every student personally. Mr Hardy explained to me that he had arrived here only a few weeks before - most of the lower staff had.

"The good doctor got rid of a heap of them. Apparently they were 'better suited elsewhere.' No idea what it means, but she seems to like me a lot."

He showed me my room, and introduced me to my roommate. His name was Irvine, and he was obviously athletic, with a square jaw and close-cut brown hair. He was a young man from the far west who'd spent far too much time drinking and partying and not enough studying. Truth be told, after Mr Hardy left, he revealed that he was still mostly interested in that.

"Some of the girls here are damn fine," he whispered conspiratorially to me, as if I were a fellow player, "I'm talking hot as hell. I've already had a few hookups, but if you play your cards right with me John, then I'll make sure to play a good wingman for you. Trust me, that Hardy fella is so bad at his job already I can't imagine how easy it will be to sneak out when we're a couple of weeks in."

I didn't exactly like Irvine, but he didn't seem a bad guy, and he let me have top bunk. Still, I was surprised a place as prestigious as this took him.

The semester began a week later, and I was getting into the swing of things. I had made one other friend; a nerdy girl by the name of Ellie. I had thought maybe she was interested in me, but it turns out she was strictly 'batting for her own team', but we still caught up to chat about our favourite books and games, since we were both fairly nerdy. She was a thin, olive-skinned woman with purple-dyed hair and a cute nose ring, and had a real rebellious streak. She liked to break things, and challenge teachers, and generally be contrarian. Evidently, she liked me because I was so easygoing and lazy, that I had no intentions of trying to put her in a box. She was one of my few human contacts outside of my teachers, Mr Hardy, and Irvine, who was still sleeping his way across the dorms. We mainly caught up for lunch, and sometimes in classes, and occasionally Irvine joined us, bragging about his latest exploits, even as Ellie rolled her eyes. She had rebuffed him twice already, but he was adamant he could 'change her.' We'd both come to the conclusion he wasn't too bright.

When I wasn't catching up with Ellie or putting up with Irvine, I pretty much entirely kept to myself. I occasionally visited the pool or outside gardens - when it wasn't raining - but for the most part I enjoyed staying in my dorm and reading, or playing videogames. Irvine enjoyed a good shooter, and we stayed up late many a night killing digital zombies, totally aware that it was okay for us to skip class.

It was funny, it was like we were doing everything that would normally get us flunked, but the teachers didn't care, and some of them seemed just as lazy as us: Miss Harvey taught food science by literally just putting on documentaries each lesson, and asking questions when it was over. It made some of the more invested students a little angry, but the way Irvine, myself, and Ellie saw it, we weren't being told what to do, and were learning at our own pace. Whenever Mom and Dad got a letter out to me - the internet had a funny interaction with the mainland so we had to rely on paper - I always replied that things were going well, and that I was finally being 'productive.'

And that went well for another few weeks, until the weirdness really started.

It began when I woke up feeling a little strange. A little bloated. Sure enough, as I examined myself in the mirror, I couldn't help but notice that my skin seemed a little softer, and my hips and thighs a little flabbier.

"Man, I've been putting on weight," I muttered to myself, "I should start using that gym."

I quickly put on my clothing, cringing a little at how they stretched in a way they certainly hadn't that previous night. Maybe I was sick? I decided to actually attend my classes that day, and see how the situation developed. I caught up with Ellie and Irvine for our biology class. It was, seemingly, the only class in which we were utterly expected to turn up to, and the teacher took it seriously.

“Now class, today we are going to look at reproductive cycles in egg-laying species,” Mr Yarrow said. The thin man indicated to the board, where several complex diagrams of chickens, owls, lizards, and so on had been drawn. “It is very important for the subject that you understand the role of oviposition - egg-laying - in the natural world, and how egg production can be used to aid human protein needs.”

He continued to blab, even as I was distracted a little by Ellie’s form. She too seemed a bit . . . bigger than the previous day. Her thighs - normally thin - had bulked up a little, pressing against the fabric. Moreover, her bare midriff seemed a little . . . pudgier than it was meant to be. I turned to her.

“Hey, Ellie, do you feel any different this morning?”

“Yeah, I feel bored.”

“No, I mean, do you feel like you’ve put on weight this morning?”

She looked at me like I’d just stabbed her in the gut. “The fuck do you mean by that? I’ve always been this weight. Is that a problem?”

I held up my hands, feeling incredibly embarrassed. “No, no! I’m sorry. It’s just, I feel like I’m bigger this morning. Around my thighs. And my hips. My clothes are stretching.”

She scoffed. “Pretty sure your clothes have always been like that, John. It’s all that pizza and videogaming.”

I retreated into silence, listening more to the lecture, which now began to discuss the role of the cloaca in such species; one tunnel for everything. Ellie made a gross face at that. But part of me remained troubled.

Over the next few days, my fears were confirmed. I was gaining weight, there was no doubt about it. My hunger had surged, and I was eating more pizza and devouring food like mad. It was impossible to describe; it was like my body needed three, maybe even *four* times as much calories as before. I tried more than once to cut back, and even go to the gym, but as always, my more introverted and lazy nature ran out, and I found myself back in the room, only leaving to grab cafeteria items. By this point, having only been at Highborn Isle for a bit of a month, my stomach was already pushing out from all of my shirts, and spilling over my shorts. My ass was becoming embarrassingly large, and my thighs had begun jiggling as I walked. And still my hunger was growing. When I looked down while I peed, I could not longer see my own penis, and strangely enough, it was beginning to feel as if it was smaller, but I chalked that up to my growing stomach.

I was not alone in this change. The entire student body was gaining weight. Every last one of them. Not just them either, the rank and file staff were affected too; Mr Hardy in

particular had once been a fit man, but now had a bulging stomach and fat ass that barely fit into his uniform. The only ones that remained thin and lithe were Dr Roe and her senior staff, including Mister Yarrow. We were all getting fatter, no matter how much we worked out, or tried to avoid eating; we had become pigs, and the cafeteria was increasingly the place to be. Irvine, my roommate who was so proud of his athletic body and attraction to women, was gaining weight as fast as any of us; he looked like a fat gamer stereotype now, and was increasingly more interested in that hobby than the various pretty girls in the women's dorm, who themselves were blowing up like blimps. Ellie, my thin friend who was just as often sneaking into the boy's dorm as not, was nearly equal in weight to me, and where she had a flat ass before, now I couldn't avoid looking at the peachy thing she'd developed, even as it was still getting larger.

Worst of all, however, was that *no one recognised this as strange*.

"What are you talking about, man?" Irvine said, "I've always been a little pudgy. Nothing wrong with that. Chicks dig some 'love handles'."

"Ugh! Why do I have to keep telling you, I've always been a big girl!" Ellie said. "Jeez, what a way to talk to a woman."

"John, even when you were my student back in the day you were a bit on the porky side," Mr Hardy chuckled, "and hell, I was too! Nothing wrong with that."

Even Dr Roe dismissed my concerns, though she seemed surprised when I voiced them: "Oh John, I think you're just under a bit of stress as you adjust to our unique curriculum. Why don't you have a nice Twinkie Bar or three and relax in your room? You can knuckle down next week and be more *productive* then."

But still I put on weight, and still my hunger grew. I was utterly insatiable; when I didn't eat my stomach groaned and whined, and when I finally gave in I couldn't stop stuffing myself with pizza, and calories, and milkshakes, and chicken, and mashed potato and gravy, and so much more, stopping only to water down the food in preparation for more, or to defend my hoard of food from Irvine, who himself was devouring as much as he could also. Finally, when I was finished with my food, I would lie there, clutching my tight stomach, grunting as my body absorbed it. I would clench my eyes, trying to breath regularly, so overstuff I felt like I could burst, yet knowing the hunger, the need to get fatter, would return. And still, no one but me recognised how strange this was.

I felt like I was going mad. Something was off about Highborn Isle, and it was only getting worse. Either I was going mad, or somehow I was the only person who was sane. Several times I tried to book the ferry to head back to the mainland, but the stormy weather made it impossible. I tried to call my folks, but I was informed that the cable had been cut, likely by sea debris, and would take time to be repaired. Even our internet was busted, though Dr Roe announced it would be fixed "soon."

Always soon.

And in the meantime, we grew, even while something else shrank. It was two and a half months into the first semester when I realised how small my dick had become. Beneath my enlarged stomach - I now appeared severely overweight, as did we all - it was little more than a nub, one that I could almost feel shrink with each passing moment. It itched, and I was deeply afraid of what was happening down there. The fact that my hips had widened considerably, and my own face softened, my chest losing all its body hair, put some very frightening possibilities in mind.

"We're losing our fucking penises!" I yelled to a number of my dorm associates, but each ignored me. "Why don't you notice this? We're becoming obese? Our dicks are disappearing! We're becoming obese women, or - or something worse!"

"Go away, weirdo!"

"Yeah, no need to mock our size bro. We're growers, not showers!"

There was nothing I could say to reach them. Even Irvine was starting to joke about always having had to make do with a micropenis, and that 'women never minded.' Ellie I didn't even try to tell; I saw less and less of her these days, as she stayed in her room, eating with her girlfriends, the same ones she'd hated not too long ago.

I returned to my room that day, and continued to eat, this time trying to eat only what was necessary, only to fail pretty much instantly. It was as if my body craved more food, burning it as I consumed it, fuelling further changes. I didn't even make it to the top bunk that night; I was too heavy, and my penis burned. My ass was sore and instead I collapsed into the beanbag, lying back as I clutched the rounded mound that was my stomach, trying to breathe. I fell unconscious more in response to the awful pressure than any peace.

The next day I woke, my behind still sore, my stomach still full. The early pangs of hunger were already returning, but something was a little different. A little stranger yet still. I managed to pull myself up onto my feet - God, my feet ached for some reasons, especially my toes - and turned to inspect myself. Something brown flicked in my peripheral vision, and I became fully awake.

There was no way. There couldn't be.

Slowly, carefully, I twisted my body, trying not to wake the sleeping Irvine as I inspected myself. There, on the side of my hip, and over the top of my ass, a patch of large brown feathers had developed. The quills belonged to my body; they literally pushed through the skin, and sat largely flat against it. They looked exactly like bird feathers.

"B'Gawk!" I gasped, and immediately clutched my throat.

"What the *CLUCK!*?"

Cluck's Ticking, Part 2: The Clutch

Holy shit, I had feathers. Actual, factual feathers growing around my ass and on the sides of my hips! I felt at them, pulling at the quills to check that this wasn't some obscene joke, but they were unmistakably part of me, piercing my skin and causing me to wince painfully when I tried to remove or manipulate them. Their colouring was a mottled brown, the quills half a centimetre in thickness and half a ruler's span in length. The feather itself was a couple of inches or so wide, tapering to a fine point, and they naturally lay flat against my skin, though the more agitated and terrified I became, the more they seemed to arc upwards, like a bird trying to make itself look larger. It felt utterly alien.

"The absolute *cluck* - I mean fuck!" I said.

I grabbed my throat, eyes wide. Once was a coincidence, but twice was a pattern. I was clucking like a chicken when I tried to swear. Or when I was agitated. I needed more information. I needed to wake Irvine.

It took the better part of two minutes grabbing his arm and rocking him back and forth. The formerly athletic jock's figure was now nearly as bloated as my own, and I noticed that for some reason he had his hand protectively over his stomach, mumbling as I tried to rock him.

"N-no . . . don' hurt them. Precious. Not done cooking yet . . ."

"Irvine!" I shouted, "wait the *CLUCK* up man!"

At that, his eyes went wide open.

"What are you yapping on about John?"

"Your ass! Check out your ass now!"

He raised an eyebrow. "Are you serious? Dude, I date hot chicks, not tubby dudes."

"Look! Look what happened last night?"

I turned in my underwear, and showed him the grotesque feathers that were pushing out from my sides and above my ass.

"See? See!? I'm growing feathers and I'm freaking out dude!"

And then, to my absolute horror and shock, Irvine just rolled his eyes.

"So what, this is just an attempt to show how pretty your feathers are? No offence John, but I still pull more hens than you do."

Hens. He'd said *hens*. I'd never heard Irvine call any woman a *hen* before, wasn't that just some mid-20th century term for a married woman or something? And why did he consider me growing feathers to be utterly normal? He rose from his bed, complaining of needing breakfast, and sure enough he had a set of mottle black feathers in the same areas as me. My stomach panged for hunger, and I could hear his bloated belly growl too, but I needed to ascertain one last thing before he dressed to leave.

“Wait, Irvine. Stop.”

He rolled his eyes. Jeez, he had gained weight. Even his hips looked wider. “What?”

“How long have I had these feathers?”

“Dude, I don’t know, from birth, like the rest of us?”

“The - the rest of us?”

But he pushed past me and made for the door to the dorm. Another pang of hunger came over me, and after quickly dressing myself, I followed him, needing food.

And needing answers.

The cafeteria was a collection of fattened, bloated students and even some teachers, all of them scratching at feathers that were pushing from the gap between their shirts and pants, or between the tops and skirts of the girls. It terrified me; why did *none* of them notice? Was I going crazy? My stomach quivered, and I could not fight the hunger that was coming. I loaded up my plate and went to sit with Ellie.

The former petite punk-rocker type was now inarguably overweight. She was eating with wild abandon, pecking at her food with quick fingers that were similarly swollen. I realised that my own fingers were in fact a little swollen also.

“Hey, Ellie,” I said experimentally, “your feathers look nice this morning.”

“So do yours,” she said absent-mindedly, downing some hotcakes. “You ready for agricultural studies today? I figure I might as well attend the one class people here seem to take seriously.”

I nodded, unsettled by her normalcy over this.

“Ellie, is something strange going on here? I mean . . . at Gallus Dee?”

She raised an eyebrow. “You mean, some kind of conspiracy?”

“Exactly.”

She smirked. “Absolutely, there is.”

It was an enormous relief to hear, even as I tore into the reserves of bacon and . . . not, something about eating eggs put me off this morning. Bacon and bread this morning. I could stomach something made *with* eggs, but eggs directly was a bit too far.

“Thank God,” I said, “I’m glad someone else *finally* noticed.”

“Yep,” she said, smirking, “I think someone is trying to reshape and change us.”

“Exactly!”

“Changing our circumstances, and redirecting our futures.”

“I’m glad someone else sees it.”

“To try and make us into educated and productive members of society.”

I felt as if I were a balloon that had just been deflated. She was mocking me, and I could see it in her smirk that this was so.

“You think I’m crazy, don’t you?”

“Naw, I just think you’re hungry. Have some more.”

I did, but I also resolved to get to the bottom of this. For the rest of the day, I actually did something I’d never done before; I fully attended all my classes. Agricultural studies, mathematics advanced, marketing in business, even accounting! In each of them, I was one of the few students there, and those that attended were also bloated as I was, and only getting bigger. They had feathers also, ranging from dark yellow to mottled brown like myself to jet black. Their asses were huge, hips widened, and to my shock, most of the teachers were the same, including Mr Hardy at the head of our dorm. The only ones that seemed unaffected were some of the aide staff, who just looked at me as if I was ignorant when I questioned them. The other unaffected individuals were our agricultural studies teacher, as well as, of course, Dr Elizabeth M. Roe, who I’d taken to avoiding, just in case she was behind this all.

Worse, even as my search for answers went nowhere, I could feel my body continuing to change: my hips had broadened even further, and my stomach had rounded more. The feathers had spread, and a strange bump had developed at the base of my spine, stretching out at least a full two inches. My fingers were getting stubbier, and conversely it felt like my legs were shrinking to the bone, the skin beginning to flake and harden as if it were scaled or something. There was also a terrible itching around my ass, and behind my penis, that was making me greatly concerned.

I was terrified, and it was even worse when I arrived at the dorm at the end of a long day, and Mr Hardy was there, borderline unrecognisable. Even throughout the day, he’d changed. His legs had lost much of their musculature, and like mine were more and more bony. Even the skin appeared as if it were yellowing. In contrast, his waistline had expanded aggressively, and he barely fit within his clothing anymore. Fears were sticking out of his waistline, and small tufts of them were hanging from his shorts as well.

“Mr Teeran, how are you doing?” he asked, as if his body hadn’t rapidly changed in the course of a few days.

“I’m - I’m well. Feeling a little bloated, though. Aren’t you?”

He seemed to consider this. “Certainly am,” he decided upon, rubbing his rotund stomach, “but that’s what it’s all about, isn’t it?”

“What’s it all about, exactly?”

He chuckled, and put a hand on my shoulder that should have been reassuring, but instead simply revealed to me how much his fingers had changed, becoming stubbier and wider.

“About being a productive member of the future, of course! Isn’t that what Dr Roe always says? Her and that Doctor Yarrow?”

My eyes widened. Doctor Yarrow had been one of the few staff who were seemingly unaffected by these strange mutations. The thin man was knowledgeable, and moreover literally taught *biology*. If anyone knew what was going on, or could have information prised from them in some way, it must be him.

“Yeah, uh, exactly,” I managed. “Have a good night then, Mr Hardy.”

“Night to you too John. Don’t let me see the light under your door too long now, we want you guys roosting up properly. *Cluck!* I meant ‘rested.’ Rested up properly.”

I stepped away from Mr Hardy, trying to appear normal. But I was afraid. Very afraid. I would have to talk to Mr Yarrow.

As I slipped into bed, I felt at my abnormally rounded stomach. It was firm and round, and more exaggerated for the fact that his thighs had become swollen and fattened. Above him, already asleep, Irvine groaned and grunted, his stomach making odd bubbling noises. My own stomach was just as bad, and it felt strange to hold. It was as if it were fully of something, or many somethings. Like it was packed from the inside. There was a growing pressure that was evident in it, and I worried I would explode or something.

It took some time to get down to sleep; my mind was preoccupied by the horrors of my changing body, and the far greater horror that I was the only one who seemingly recognised it. And even as I drifted off to sleep, I could still feel something turning over in my insides, hard and rounded, like something being *formed*. It was the last thought before I lost consciousness.

I was woken in the night by a painful pressure in my loins. I gasped, breathing heavily, even as the pressure rose and rose. I’d never felt anything like it before.

“Ngh! - Ah - Ah - Ahhhhh . . . what’s - what’s happeninggggHHhh!”

I clutched my dome, and to my horror, it seemed to have actually have gotten even *bigger*. Above me, Irvine was also shifting, causing the entire bed frame to shake slightly. He groaned, and seemed to be actually *clucking* under his breath. I barely had time to concentrate on that though, because the painful pressure was mounting more and more. I shifted to my side, still clutching my taut belly, and felt at the base of my spine: my ass had expanded even wider, and what’s more, that strange protuberance out of my spine was beginning to feel more and more like a nascent tail. Feathers were adorning my lower half, all the way to the top of my thighs, and now climbing up my back. How could the changes have advanced so much? Were they accelerating?

“Ohhhhhh f-fuck . . . s-so much p-pressure!”

I spread my legs apart in order to get more comfortable, but it did very little. My stomach was rock hard, and what’s more, I could definitely tell that the contents of it was not purely fat and organs and tissue. I could feel multiple objects within, large objects. I had no way of knowing how big exactly, but they felt huge to me, and what’s more, *they wanted out*. I tensed, trying to fight the alien feeling, that borderline-instinctual drive to push. But I was losing, and judging from the gasps and groans above me, Irvine was too, though he did not seem so panicked about it.

“Ohhh shit, NGH! Gotta p-push!” I exclaimed, finally giving in.

I pushed.

I pushed and pushed and pushed and pushed. There was too much pressure, and my belly was too overly full with contents to struggle against it anyway. I gasped, moaned, groaned, and cried as my hips spread wider apart in response to my efforts, and slowly but surely, I could feel something hard and round descend from my stomach and down towards an exit. My ass felt strange, different somehow, as if its exit was altogether bigger and wider. I felt at it, and my eyes went wide; whatever was descending was coming out there! And yet it didn’t feel like an anus at all, but something larger, more intricate, and hooked to other systems.

I knew it, because even as the pain grew, I felt a strange and repugnant pleasure. It spread my cheeks, and I pushed once more, dick getting hard as it spread me wider. My passage was somehow longer, pulled back from my body slightly. I huffed and puffed, hugging myself as I strained.

“B-B-B-B’GAWWWK!”

I crowed like a hen, shocking myself, and then it squeezed from my person. I felt the rounded object exit the hole between my legs, and a wearied sense of comfort and strange, lingering enjoyment came over me. I laid there, as if in post-coital pleasure, savouring the sensations of delivery.

“Delivery? The *cluck* am I thinking?”

I shifted awkwardly, trying to avoid the slink dampening of the sheets between my legs, as well as my gravid belly. Even in the darkness, I could just see from the light of the moon what I had delivered, and it gave me pause. But then, I guess I had just been in denial all along.

It was an egg.

A chicken’s egg, only it was massive, easily eight times as large, and much tougher in the shell. It was coated in slime from my body, but there it sat.

“H-holy *cluck*, I just delivered a *b’gawwking* egg.”

I held my stomach, unbelieving that the enormous object had come from me, somehow. I was seriously mutated, and judging from the clucking and b'gawking from above me, so was Irvine. I had little doubt that other members of the school, perhaps every feathered, bloated member I had seen, was either currently laying an egg or about to. The thought of Ellie lying back and clucking like some sort of madwoman as she laid an egg was insane to me, even more so for Mr Hardy. I needed to get answered. This was going too far, and I was afraid of the changes that would follow if I didn't - B'GAWK!

I gasped, tensing as another pressure rose once more. No, no! I was already feeling the need to push again; my stomach was still rounded and tense, and I could feel more of the contents pressing against one another. The eggs. I was literally pregnant with eggs! I tried to fight it again, but it was useless. Once more the dreadful need to push came over me, and I succumbed to it.

"Oh G-God . . . s-so much p-pressure . . ."

I pushed again, my hips widening once more in preparation for the descent of the - of *my* eggs. It lowered, slipping through my passage quicker this time, but still causing me to squirm as it passed. It was utterly alien and strange, and yet even through the pain I couldn't deny a horrid pleasure. It was as if new sensitive nerves had formed in my changing behind, and now I was unable to be completely repulsive by their new function.

"Ooh, aahhhh . . . *cluck* . . . why does this feel - Mhm! - sooo good!"

My cheeks spread, and I shivered in a light orgasm as yet another egg passed from my belly. But I received no reprieve; the pressure was not letting up, and my laying was only getting faster. As soon as one egg left my system, another was ready in line to be next, and soon I was continually huffing and puffing as egg after egg left my body. I squirmed and writhed, gasped and groaned, tensed and squeezed, as one by one they passed through my passage and left my body. And with each successful laying, I clucked and squawked, scratching at the end of the bed with my leathery-skinned legs. The pleasure rose higher, and soon I didn't *want* the process to end, it felt so good. Painful, yes, but the pleasure of squeezing eggs from my body was greater than any act of masturbation. Judging from the groans and cries from Irvine above me, it was better than many a one-night stand with a woman as well.

The orgasms continued to build, overlapping one another, and I was helpless to them. I felt at my dick, which had hardened considerably, but found myself shocked that it was also shrunken; stubbier than it had been. Yet another change to be horrified at, were I not indulging in the pleasures of laying eggs. The pressure was lessening, but there was still one egg to go, I sensed. I could feel it now, nestled in my stomach. Or perhaps, even, my *womb*. Regardless, I could tell it was the largest of them yet, and the pain and pressure of pushing it was extreme. The pleasure too; it caught in my canal, and I licked my lips,

clucking in delirious joy as it passed ever so slowly. Finally, it emerged wetly from my behind, to join the collection of seven other eggs.

“B’GAWWK! B’GAWWK! B’GAWWK!”

I lay back, panting heavily, my breath a consistent huff as I came to terms with what I’d just done. I had pushed out actual eggs, far larger than their regular kind, yes, but eggs nonetheless. They had come from inside me; been grown from inside me! I was tired from delivering them, and I could tell Irvine was too, having just finished. We had both done something deeply extraordinary but deeply *wrong*, but I suspected I was the only one who knew that second part. We were being turned into egg-layers, which meant that the passage I had pushed these eight eggs through was no longer a rectum or an anus or whatever you wanted to call it.

It was a *cloaca*.

I was too tired to do anything but lie back again, the pressure in my still-sizable stomach greatly relieved, but questions still racing through my mind. Why did I lay eggs? Was this Dr Roe’s plan? Was there life inside them, or just - oh God - *yolk*? Were my changes done, or just beginning? But before I could slip back to sleep again, even as my vision swam, one question was more pressing than all the rest:

“What the *cluck* am I going to do about this?”

Cluck’s Ticking, Part 3: The Nightmare

“What’s wrong, *Miss Teeran*? Is your nest not comfortable enough?”

I opened my eyes to a very different set of surroundings than I had imagined. I was squatting upon a great bet of straw, circled around my form and glued together, smelling of something pungent I didn’t even want to think of. In the doorway stood Dr Elizabeth M. Roe, her lips pulled back into a sickly smile. She seemed to loom, taller than I ever imagined her, but that was when I realised she was not large; I was small. The walls were immense, the ceiling far above me, and the room itself empty save the nest beneath me. I tried to reply, to tell her to let me go, that I was meant to be human, but all that came out was a strange rasping noise; my lips didn’t seem quite right. They seemed hardened. Numb.

“Oh, my poor little Johnny girl, can’t you talk anymore? But then, I suppose that would be quite odd, wouldn’t it. Can you imagine a *chicken* that could talk?”

Each word rumbled in the air, seeming to course through my being, carrying horrible portent. There was something wrong with me; it was difficult to move. I felt even more bloated somehow. My arms weren’t responding. It was like they were at odd angles. I tried

again to say something, but my lips simply weren't responding. Again, that same strange rasping noise, verging on becoming something else. Something *wrong*.

"Cat got your tongue, John?" the looming giant said. She appeared twisted, almost inhuman, her features a parodic expression of malicious intent. She stepped forward upon the wooden floor, and it was then that I realised she had a basket in one hand. "Don't worry, I'm just there to collect. I'm not a fox in the henhouse. Any minute now, the pressure will begin."

At the moment she finished her sentence, I felt it. A low rumbling in my core. I was fatter than I was meant to be, swollen. I was squatting low, unnaturally, and my legs seemed to twist and claw in ways not ordinary. But it was the pressure above all that concerned me. I twisted my head from side to side, catching a view of Dr M. Roe in both my eyes.

Wait, that wasn't right. Why was I having to turn my head to see her like that? What was wrong with my vision?

But before I could even consider the implications of that train of thought, the urge to push came on. I felt pregnant. I felt full. It was like my body was expanding impossibly, unexplainably, and I was but a passive passenger to it. I fluttered my arms. Wait, fluttered?

Something entered between my hips. Something ovoid. Hard and rounded. I grunted as it squeezed into a passage, and the urge to push was all there was. I couldn't even think about what was wrong with my body, why I was fluffing up. Why I could see brown and black feathers ruffling on my form.

"Good, good girl. Keep pushing, little one. You'll be a fine producer. You just have to accept it."

I strained, trying again to speak. No use, just more rasping. I scratched at the straw with my talons. I mean my feet. I wriggled my ass, jutting out my tail feathers in order to best position my rear. Tail feathers, clawing feet, there was something wrong but my mind was molasses. There was only the task ahead, and the need to bear down and push.

"Here it comes, the first of many, many others."

I strained, it enveloped my passage, widening the strange tunnel that connected out of my ass. It was wrong, it was uncomfortable, and yet there was a pleasure to it as well. An innate rightness, as if my body was fulfilling the function it was always meant for. I bristled my feathers, fluttered my wings once more, and pushed.

The first egg parted the lips of my cloaca and plonked into the bed of straw. The sensation of it leaving was immense, a wicked relief from the alien feeling, but it quickly ended as it was taken up again by more pressure. My womb was still full, I still had eggs to express. I turned my head to take in the egg I'd just laid; it still had a thick coating of translucent slime running down its side, and I was astonished at its size. It had pushed that

out of me! But beyond the shock, even worse, was the strange pride. It ruffled my feathers, so to speak.

More pressure, more bulging contents within my womb, more pushing, more laying. The eggs came, more of them, faster and faster. I was a prisoner to my body and a prisoner to the pleasure, and in this strange new reality I found myself in it was impossible to stop. The giant form of Dr M. Roe seemed to become ever more malicious and pleased with herself. She cooed and laughed at my every discomfort, and clapped and danced in an exaggerated fashion at each egg I forced from my birth canal. Her obsessive gaze pierced me to my core; despite her comments, she truly did appear like the fox in the henhouse, her gleaming eyes betraying her glee at my situation.

And with each strain, I found it more and more difficult to think. There was something wrong with my body and what it was meant to be. What it wasn't. Did I always have wings? How many toes was I meant to have? And what the hell was wrong with my lips? With each question, I felt my mind drifting close to the answer, but it was like being rigged to an electric shock; with every question, my body was sent into overdrive, pushing out more and more eggs. I wanted to scream at the Doctor, demand her to tell me where I was, what she had done to me, and what she had done to my friends.

But there was only the laying. The endless push and push and push and push and push of eggs through my body. With each one that passed through me, the pressure only grew, my body only bloated further, and the need to bear down became ever more intense.

Something.

Was.

Wrong.

With.

Me.

The walls expanded. The door grew. And Dr Roe rose to greater and greater heights, leaning forward like a beast from ancient prehistoric past until all I could see was her face and claws and that terrible, terrible basket that seemed to carry such foreboding ominousness.

"Nearly ready," she said, and her voice echoed across the vast chamber, a thousand slithering snake-like voices seeming to rebound through my aching mind. "Just a few more to go."

I tried to speak. It was like talking underwater. There was something on my mouth, hard and bone-like, crusted and shaped and formed into a curving point. I twisted my jaw, even as the urge to push came on once more, and managed to open it. And to my horror, I realised that this unnatural sharpness was my mouth. And it could only ever say one damn thing.

“B’GAWWWWK!!!”

A great guffaw, mighty and terrible as the gods of empires long fallen. A hand the size of a house lumbered forward, fingers like talons reaching to pluck the many eggs pulled around my form. I continued to labour, breathing through my beak and trying to understand why, why any of this was happening to me. But there was no resource, no way out. I could only push, and watch as the ‘good’ Doctor plucked my eggs one by one as if held by large tweezers, placing them into the basket over and over until it was near overflowing.

“B’GAWWWWK!!!”

The devil woman smiled, and her teeth were filed to demonic points. Her eyes were yellow, snake-like, as if the essence of her soul had been made manifest. Her face was the moon, the sun, the cosmos, surrounding me with its vastness. I was nothing before it; not John Teeran, not a student of Gallus Dee. Not even human. Just a layer of eggs. A producer.

Ever so slowly, the mammoth titan before me withdrew a mirror, a broken shard of the sky itself, and crashed it down upon the earth before me, puncturing the wooden floorboards. There, in the reflection, was the real me. The creature she had turned me into.

The chicken - the hen - stared back at me, and there was nothing human left in its expression.

I woke with a scream, covered in sweat and still reeling from the horrid nightmare. It had felt so utterly real, and it shook me to my core that I had nearly believed it was. Still experienced the post-traumatic jitters, I flung back my sheets to witness the eggs - the real eggs - that I had laid the previous night

There was nothing there. Just empty space between my legs. Even the bed was dry. It made no sense. I patted myself over, trying to find evidence of what I and Irvine had experienced before I had fallen back into unconsciousness and terrible dreaming. Even my clothing was dry and ordinary.

“That . . . doesn’t make sense,” I whispered to myself. “That’s impossible, how could they *b’gawwwking* do that?”

I did a double-take, shaking my head a little. The chicken-like speech had just slipped out, as if it were totally normal.

“So not everything has been a dream,” I said to myself. “I need to look myself over. See what the *cluck* has changed.”

I cringed again at the compulsion to talk like that, but it at least lent further credence to my theory - nightmares aside, I was becoming chicken-like. *We all* we. I got out of bed, and it was impossible not to notice that my body was considerably less bulky than it had

been. My belly had lost a bit of its bloat, though my hips were still wide and ass still undergoing growth. Irvine wasn't in his bunk; he must have left already; a quick look at the clock confirmed that it was halfway past 10am. I didn't care, it wasn't like the classes here were real anyway. It felt more like they were just there for . . . stalling. For what, well, that was what I was terrified of.

With some difficulty, I managed to get my pajamas off. Had I gone to bed in pajamas? It was hard to remember, between the dream and the laying I had done. It had been real. I know it had. Something was *clucking* with me. I waddled to the bathroom of our dorm and stood before the full length mirror.

"Holy *cl* - shit!" I said. At least one word still worked.

I had changed again, once more overnight. My hips were wide, parodically so. They would have looked ridiculous even on a curvy woman; it was spreading my legs further and further apart. My penis had reduced in size as well; it was basically impossible to see. For all intents and purposes, I no longer had one.

My eyes brimmed with tears. My body was further changed, but for several minutes, I simply had to absorb that horrible realisation. Nothing was replacing my manhood; the skin was becoming flat and absorbed into my being. I could feel my cloaca situated between my legs; the only orifice I contained back there now, fit for all purposes. It disgusted me, and I wanted to give it no mind, but I could feel that it was larger and ran deeper into me. I wiped away my tears, and controlled my breathing. If I was going to get out of this situation, I needed to focus. I needed to finally step up and take action.

I continued to scan over my form, taking in every detail. The feathers had spread; they now coated my fat thighs, and ran right up my back. They were longer on my expanded rear; the flesh and bone had warped there to push outwards yet further. There was no way I *wasn't* growing a large, chicken-like tail. The fact that my legs from the knees down had thinned considerably, the skin becoming grey-ish and scaled, was further evidence of that. The skin itched, and I knew it would only get worse. My toes were longer, but there were still five of them. That would likely change. My arms were largely the same, though feathers covered more of them now, with several brown and black quills beginning to jut from my forearms.

How far would it go? Was I doomed to become a full chicken? Would I shrink, like in my dream? Or would I become some strange man-chicken hybrid to be paraded before strangers as some weird display?

"Why - why is this happening?" I said. My voice was raspy, but thankfully there was no sign of a beak developing; just the red puffening of skin rising; the first sign of the red comb crest I would surely develop.

The tears flowed freely as I looked over my bloated, mutated form. Already my gut was churning, the twisting sensations inside it slowly building. If what happened last night was real, then it was undeniable that I was growing my eggs inside of me. Which meant my body was now on a timer. I could only hope the dream was an exaggeration. My gaze in the mirror changed from one of confusion and fear to an angry determination.

"I am *not* ending up any more like this," I said. "I don't care what happens. I am getting off this island. Time to finally *clucking* act."

I took a shower, uncaring how it would affect my feathers. Afterwards, I patted myself down, feeling a little more swollen than I had five minutes before. I ignored it, just as I ignored the way my ass was a little sore, the skin and tissue stretching a little further with each passing minute. I dressed in the clothing supplied to me - better not to arouse suspicion - and sketched out a plan in my mind:

First, I had to find Ellie and Irvine. They were the two I knew the most and trusted the most. Even though their memories were being altered like all the rest, I would need allies of some kind if I was to reverse this insanity and escape. They still saw me as a friend - Ellie more so, but Irvine was at least tolerably amiable - so I could use some ploy or favour request to get them on my side.

Second, I had to get to Yarrow's lab. The rake thin man knew what was happening, he had to. He and Dr Roe were thick as thieves. If I could find out what the biology teacher was doing to us, then the whole mystery could be unravelled. Maybe I could even find a cure.

Third . . . third, I had no real idea. What we found in Yarrow's lab would determine everything. So I decided that third would be finding a way to organise a ferry. The sea was wild at this time of year, but in the right kind of emergency a rescue boat or craft of some kind could be called over. Roe's office could well hold the key to that. Either the office, or perhaps the dock, which was off limits to even most staff.

It was a barebones plan, but in truth, I had never planned anything in my life. I had wasted my efforts in life, and now this was my punishment. Well, no more. No more procrastination. No more videogames. And certainly no more lounging about getting fat and lazy and pumped full of eggs. John Teeran was going to change for good, and not in the way Roe wanted me to.

My stomach growled with hunger, but I restrained myself, only eating what was strictly necessary from the food leftover in the dorm fridge. It pained me not to eat more, my body demanded it, but if I was going to save myself, I needed to strengthen my will. So, stomach growling, I stepped out into the hall, waddling down to the cafeteria to find my friends.

Only, it was empty. There was barely a student or teacher in sight. Had something happened when our eggs were taken and our beds cleaned right from under us? For several minutes I nearly went into another state of panic, until I saw a fellow student named Sanjay passing through. Like me, he was bloated, and he had dark feathers from his neck. His ass was distended, pushing out between his shorts and shirt, but he didn't seem to notice.

"Sanjay? Where is everyone?"

He looked at me like I was an alien, and for a brief moment, I was overcome with hope that someone else at least recognised the changes that were happening to us. But instead he just gave me a condescending laugh.

"John! Too much time in your room, man! Didn't you know the big game is on today?"

"The . . . game?"

Another laugh. He seemed almost to caww and cluck like a chicken as he did so. It was unnerving.

"The football game, man! Reds and Blues are playing their first big game today. Everyone will be there."

A football game played by bloated, egg laying chicken people. It was absurd. Unbelievable, were it not happening to me. That's where Ellie and Irvine would be. And that was where I needed to go. I began to run, as fast as my bloated body could take me, across the island to the playing field. My stomach lurched as I moved, already behind schedule.

A football game. A damned *clucking* football game that would grab everyone's attention. This would complicate things. It might also be an opportunity.

I ran faster, clutching my belly all the way.

Cluck's Ticking, Part 4: The Game

I had never visited the field before; the weather on the island was often far too rainy and thunderous. But today, the sun had finally come out, and the staff had organised for the two teams - the Reds and the Blues - to finally face off against each other. I managed to waddle my way to the stands, which were full to overflowing with the packed students. And they *were* packed, each of them bloated and feathered and changed as much as I was, some perhaps even further along. I recognised several girls who I had viewed with attraction in my first week of arriving; they were now rounded, their bellies bloated with what had to be eggs, and thick chicken feathers bursting out from holes in their clothing. Some even had developed little red crests much like myself. One even had a pair of hardened lips, no doubt the early formation of a beak. It was a horrifying sight to see, and even worse to know that the changes were not yet done.

“John! Hey - eurgh! - John! Saved you a seat!”

It was Irvine, but not as I knew him. He too had changed in the night. He was situated near Ellie, who looked irritated at his presence. The self-described ‘ladies man and player’ now looked anything but; his belly was nearly as big as mine, and his legs were thin storks of grey-yellow scales, ending in a set of bare feet that were obviously changing to grow a set of talons. It made me realise that while we were all changing, some of us were developing more quickly in some places than others. I managed to haul myself up the stands, but with the increasingly rotund nature of my belly it was a difficult slog. I could practically *feel* new eggs developing inside me. I had a womb now, it was undeniable; a chicken-like womb that was churning at a rapid pace to develop head-sized eggs. It repulsed me, but it explained the occasional twisting and tensing in my stomach, and of course, the inevitable fullness and urge to push. I sat down between the two of them, shocked at how much their conditions had advanced. But then, so had my own.

“Nearly missed the game, Johnno,” Irvine said, grinning smugly. He patted his belly proudly. “Got us the best seats in the house. Go Blues, right?”

“Yeah,” John said weakly, “go Blues. Irvine, your legs, have they always been so . . . scaly?”

Irvine gave him a funny look, as did Ellie.

“Course,” he replied, scratching one idly. Before my very eyes, the scale he just scratched extended a fraction. “Why, are you jealous, pink legs? Just because you were born with a weird flesh deformity, you and Ellie.”

I looked to Ellie, and she blushed. It was clearly a sore point for her. Whatever was changing them had not just changed their memories, but was continually updating them, making each new change feel as if it had always been there. I alone was unaffected.

“Yeah, yeah, very funny,” I managed. My stomach growled loudly, and it set off a series of growls on the stands around me. Ellie winced and clutched her belly, which was sitting heavily out over her shorts, and was already developing more and more feathers. I pushed past it. “Look, we need to talk. All three of us. I need your help with something.”

Again, my stomach growled, and another ripple of growled moved through the crowd. An entire stand of chicken-like students, moaning and clutching their pregnant, egg-filled bellies.

“Not now John,” Ellie said, “not when you’ve gone and set us off. God, I’m so *clucking* hungry. I just - *B’GAWWWWK!*”

A few more chicken cries joined her, but unlike my own horror at producing the sound, hers was accompanied with a look of joy. I was confused, until I saw where she was looking; at an enormous bucket serving of popcorn, hotdogs, and donuts that were heading our way. She clucked, as did Irvine, both of them joyful at the coming food, and it felt like the

entire stand was going to tip as dozens of fat, round students practically tripped over themselves to grab the free food. It was being handed out by several staff members. I didn't recognise many of them, but they had an ominous feel to them; they each wore a white lab coat, and all of them were thin, not remotely chicken-like at all.

'Welcome students to our first game of the season!' came Dr M. Roe's voice over the speakers. I looked around, trying to ascertain her position, but it was impossible. There were too many heavy bodies around, it was pure chaos! 'It is so good to have you here for the inaugural opening match between the mighty Reds and the fierce Blues here at Gallus Dee College. And look how the weather has come out! It has to be, ahem, a 'clucking' good coincidence, doesn't it?'

I clenched my fists as she said that. She *knew*, I could tell. There was a venomous dark humour to her voice.

'But before the game begins, you all look positively starved! So let's give a big thanks to the agricultural lab for putting together a large meal of your favourites; seed buns, seed donuts, seed-topped hot dogs, and popcorn! A form of popped seed!'

My mouth salivated at the mere thought of tasting all that seed. It was like a lizard part of my brain had activated. I *needed* to be fed. Needed to fill my large stomach to help its contents grow. Suddenly, seed-based food seemed the tastiest, best thing in the world. I began to step forward to the troughs where the food was beginning to be deposited to. Troughs. The horror of it was not lost on me, but I needed the food.

'So eat up and enjoy, everyone! The game is about to begin, and we want to make sure it all goes egg-actly to plan. So give it up for . . . THE REDS AND THE BLUES!'

I looked down at my clenched fist, feeling something strange, and saw that the fingers were yet further extended. I needed to get Ellie and Irvine's help as soon as possible before I lost functionality. What if I went full chicken? It didn't matter at that moment. All that mattered was that I could scoop up even more seed-based food than I otherwise would have, and indulge in it. I packed it down into my stomach, occasionally fighting off others, making sure I got my fill. I knew in my heart that each morsel of food was helping fuel my body's changes, and moreover, fuel the egg-making process in my new womb. But the need was greater than my revulsion.

The cluck is wrong with me?.

My thoughts were interrupted by a loud buzzer. Suddenly two groups of cheerleading women took up formation at either end of the field. They began to chant their team anthems, both ending in some variation of "GO REDS!" or "GO BLUES!" These were women who previously had been the upper clique; the beautiful and fashionable who had been so above it all, whose family money had bought them everything, and who paid other, nerdier individuals to do all the work for them. And now, without even being capable of knowing it,

they were reduced to round, fat, pregnant forms, their cheeks swollen and feathers sticking out through the gaps in their awkward two piece cheerleading costumes. They attempted to jump and twirl and even launch one another into the air, but instead it was like a circus act; they collapsed and rolled, groaning and muttering a desire for more food. I looked around, aghast that this was happening, and searching for someone else to notice the insanity of what was occurring, but none of them did. It was as if I had entered the Twilight Zone.

“They look ridiculous,” I exclaimed, “they can’t even dance.”

“Pfft, they’re all the hot bitches anyway,” Ellie said. “Think they’re so good with all their big bellies and nice feathers.”

“Yeah, it’s not like we could dance much better,” Irvine said, rolling his eyes. He was already hitting on a chick beside him; though ‘chick’ had a much changed meaning to me now. “Anyway, shut up dude. The game is about to start, and I’m betting seeds on it.”

“Betting . . . seeds?”

A loud siren blared, and the crowd roared. Well, no, they didn’t roar. They ‘B’Gawked!’ It accompanied the sports teams entering the field.

They were a parody of football players. None of their equipment fit. None of their pads worked correctly. About the only thing strapped on correctly was their helmets, thanks to their still-human faces. Their bellies were enormous, swollen and rounded like a pregnant woman’s, and large tail growth jutting awkwardly out their backsides. Some of them had scaly bird feet, or at least something approaching what would become bird feet. They massed in ridiculous lines of blue and red facing each other, and I recognised a number of these figures as the bullies and alpha male types who had supposedly flunked out of school or not made the cut for professional sports. It was a blessing, in some way, that they were ignorant of what they had become; I can’t imagine any of them could have foreseen such a strange and terrible fate.

“This is absurd,” I said, practically shouting. My stomach gurgled again, and I felt it throb, tightening. I breathed heavily, and I noticed a number in the crowd were experiencing sudden growth as well; their bodies no doubt expanding to accommodate more eggs, and continued egg growth.

“GO TEAM!” Irvine shouted. He tried to stand, but he too cringed, clutching his fat mound, and leaning back to compensate. He wiggled his ass, and I felt the urge to do the same. I groaned as the flesh pushed out more from my backside, accompanied by the sting of more feather quills emerging from the bare skin.

The teams were now in position. It was hard *not* to watch, despite my desperation to get my friends to help me reach Yarrow’s lab. It was the most absurd spectacle I had ever witnessed in my life.

That was to say, the most absurd spectacle I had witnessed in my life *before* the starting whistle blew. Then it became sheer parody.

The two teams lurched around the field, attempting to grab the ball in a sluggish imitation of sportsmanship. Every throw, every pass was made with jerky, stumbling movements, and when Red finally got the ball, its carrier could only waddle slightly faster than a walking gait to the line, pursued by a veritable army of bloated, pregnant men giving chase. The crowd cheers, half of them clucking and b'gawking, viewing this as if it were no different than any other sports spectacle. When the ball was intercepted, Blue piled on Red in a veritable pile of mammoth bodies, to the point where several couldn't even get up.

The game continued like this for five minutes, with no points even being scored. The thin members of staff clapped and whooped and cheered alongside us, but I could tell from their expressions that their good cheer was far more malicious. I decided to use their distraction to my advantage. Feigning I had to go to the toilet, I waddled down the stand behind one, occasionally clucking despite my desire otherwise. My fingers were stretched, and I suspected in a few days they would be near unusable, but I was able to press their length to my advantage now. I shoved past one of the lab men and, pretending it was nothing more than a result of my rounded midsection, used that moment to snatch his keycard. It would grant me some level of access to the lab, though exactly to what I didn't yet know.

"Watch where you're going, big boy," he said with an irritated drawl.

"I'm as normal as anyone else, thank you very much," I feigned.

He simply smiled. "Sure you are. My mistake."

He'd bought it, and several minutes later I returned, my stomach even tighter than before. I didn't have much time. I could feel my body preparing to lay again. Each time it did, my condition got worse. I needed to get Irvine and Ellie on my side.

"Please, I - oohhh - I need your h-help," I said to them.

"When the game's over, nerd man," Irvine said. "I've got seeds riding on - aahhh ah - this."

"Study later," Ellie said, rubbing her stomach. "I've g-got other th-things to c-care about."

She turned her gaze back to the game, and disappointed, so did I. No point had been scored, particularly as several players were already dropping like flies. I leaned forward, as much as I could with my increasingly pressurised belly, as if it would help me see what was happening. Several of the players were pausing to squat, tearing off their helmets as they buckled and strained, some even placing the helmets upside down beneath them. It was then that I realised it: they were laying eggs. It was happening to them, right now and right there on the field.

“Holy *cluck*,” I said, “they’re laying.”

“Yeah,” Irvine said, frowning, “and it’s going to kill my chances of winning the bet. Dammit, why couldn’t they have laid before going out on the field!”

I looked at him, aghast, but his expression was one-hundred percent still focused on the game. Ellie was a little more disinterested, instead taking a kind of sadistic joy as the game broke down. But still she didn’t appear to see it as unusual. I breathed heavily, trying to contain my frustrations, that feeling of being the only sane person in a world gone mad. Or perhaps the only mad person in a world utterly, so strangely sane.

‘Oh dear! It appears Eric Grulle has begun laying his clutch early! And now Samuel Beckhart too! Nearly half of both teams are deep in concentration as eggs flow from their cloacas! It’ll be a race to see who can lay the fastest in order to rejoin the match. Thankfully, there are enough players on the field still to - oh no! Richard Heidegar has lost the ball and ripped down his shorts entirely! Ooh, it must be a big one to make him gasp and cry out like that! This could be anybody’s game, but that’s the rules - you can’t hold the ball until the laying’s done!’

The crowd whooped and cheered the bizarre spectacle. Over half a dozen of the players were out, some of them on their hands and knees where their pregnant bellies permitted it. Each of them huffed and puffed, bearing down, and it was impossible not to see their large cloacas stretch, even from that distance, as the head-sized eggs began to exit through their new passages. Some of them bucked their hips, eager to return to the game, while others tried interesting positions, or even huddled up, pressing their bellies against one another in a futile effort to force the eggs down earlier. It was madness, but it was only just beginning; some of them had excreted as many as three or four eggs, but more and more players were going down, faster than they could be replaced. Furthermore, a gasp from the crowd revealed that members on the stand were also going into labor.

“Oohhhh Go-ooooood!” one woman cried, “It’s sooooo b-big this t-time!”

She ripped at her shorts, already too tight upon her, and pulled them down, much as the football players had. Her hips visibly widened, her cloaca quivering as she began to cluck and caw, crying out for relief as the first egg bulged her strange sex, pushing it wide open. It exited, goey, onto the stand, but already another one was coming.

Another call from the crowd, this time from a man, and he too began to shift, scraping the stand with his strange bird-like feed. In real time, his bare feet expanded, three toes elongating to absorb the rest even as a new one formed behind. I gaped. It was true; we were turning into full chickens, a theory that was only further proven to be true by the fact that he was visibly plumping before my eyes, his spine squatting to becoming more akin to that of a hen’s.

“OOohhhhh *cluck cluck cluck B’GAWWWWWWWWk!*”

An egg practically *shot* from between his thighs, and as it did, his tail pushed out further, long feathers growing from the skin. Others helped him as he gasped, sweating, but there was no stopping the need to lay, and already others in the crowd were feeling that urge to push and expel eggs.

'A single point scored by the Reds! A good performance by Robert Dahanis, particularly since he is that team's only current player! He looks as if he is barely managing to keep those eggs in, but he has to hold on until one of his team mates are done, or else the remaining Blue player Roderick Harvish will be the one to dominate the field, having just finished his clutch of six eggs! And if that's not enough, it appears even the loyal cheerleaders are struggling - good luck with the laying girls!'

I moved through the stands, trying to get away from all this insanity. The cheerleaders indeed were breaking down, even their pathetic little dance now little more than a failed chorus as they bore down against their wills.

"Go R-reds, you're our - uugggh! - team! They're the - oooohoh - best you've ever s-seeuuugggOHHHHhh!"

They could barely make it through the worlds, struck in birth as they were. One I almost took relish in seeing brought low; she had bullied Ellie early on with several bitchy comments, and it was clear she came from money. Her name was Tara, and now she was nearly-retching as her cloaca stretched wide to push through an unfathomably large egg. But even that small amount of condolence was not enough for me; my own womb was stretched tight, practically pulsating with life, and the skin was so tight it was making me wince.

"Irvine! Ellie! I've got an i-idea!" I gasped. "While the g-game's going on. We can b-break into Yarrow's l-lab. Oohh. We can c-cause some t-trouble!"

It was my last card to play, and the only one I could think of, especially since my belly began to contract and push. The two of them were also sweating, and I could tell that their own eggs were about to arrive on the scene; Irvine was already blushing as he pulled at his shorts, allowing his tail to grow ever meatier as he strained.

"Why - *cluck* this is a big clutch - why would we d-do th-that?"

"B-because it would be r-rad," Ellie said. She at least was a natural rebel, though I knew Irvine was a jock at heart, and might follow if I said something further.

"He's a n-nerd, right?" I stammered. My cloaca was tensing, my passage self-lubricating to allow the movement of my eggs. "What's m-more classic than p-pranking a member of staff. Particularly since he h-has it out for you!"

He gave me a strange look, before howling a little as he bore down. "I've b-barely been to his c-classes!"

"He's c-called you a 'little m-man' last time I w-went!" I said. "Says ladies men like yourself are m-malajusted!"

It was the best I could do. Ellie hadn't been there the last time I went, and putting words in Yarrow's mouth might at least sway Irvine against him. I just needed some people. Ellie was already on board - even pregnant and pushing out eggs, I could see her relishing the idea of rebelling against the system - but Irvine was a selfish fucker at heart. He needed motivation. His face twisted, contorting into pain at the push, but also hatred at my words. And at that moment, I knew that I had him.

"That d-dweeb! After I l-lay my c-clutch, we're g-gonna mess his shit up! Greek f-frat s-style!"

I went to say something in response, but simply fell to grunting and chicken-like clucking and cawing as the pressure increased. There was no doubt about it now, I was laying. As was seemingly everyone on the field or adjacent to it. I looked around, wiping the sweat from my forehead and trying to see anything suspicious. Dr M. Roe was nowhere to be seen, but her lackeys were filing out in larger numbers, at least two or three dozen of them. They were the members of staff who *hadn't* been turned. They were all thin, all suited up in white lab coats and black gloves, and each was wearing a simple white surgical mask. And no one but me was paying them any attention.

Shit!

I ducked my head down, pretending I hadn't given them any more than a second's notice, lest I stick out. I had to focus on the dreadful task ahead. I had done it once before, but it still rankled at me. I was mutated, I was changed, I was turning into a goddamned chicken. The need to lay was borderline instinctual now, but I knew intellectually that this should not be my fate.

But my belly was deciding my fate for me. I choked out a cry, spreading my legs in order to widen the gap between my thighs and keep my hips apart.

"I don't *clucking* deserve thi-thissssshssshsh!" I cried.

But by then it was too late. Once more, and without the benefit of being half-asleep, I pushed. It happened faster than I expected; the first large egg entered my passage and descended, stretching my new cloaca impossibly wide.

God, it's so damn huge. Like a clucking - I mean fucking bowling ball!

Which it was, at least for all intents and purposes when it came to dimensions. I won't lie: I clucked with the best of them. Even as I felt further feathers extend from my skin, as the seed I had consumed went straight to my bird-like thighs, I cawed and clucked and even B'Gawwked! The first egg stretched my lower lips, and it occurred to me that I wasn't fully transformed down there yet, because I knew enough about chickens to know that cloacas evolved to allow easier passage of eggs. So I fell to bucking my hips, pushing it out centimetre by centimetre.

"UUUUgghghh! MMmhmm!"

Finally, *finally* it pushed past the point of no return, and rolled out from my being onto the stands. I shifted slightly, feeling the added weight of my behind. The egg was massive! It was still covered in sticky goo, some of which I could feel disgustingly leaking out of me, a thick ropey trail even connecting from my cloaca to the egg. But it was out. I tried to ignore the strange sensation of pleasure I had received in that final push, especially since a renewed need to force out an egg returned. My friends were similarly laying anyway, and so all I could do was hope they would still be on board with the plan.

“L-let’s m-move!” I said.

“N-now? Are you c-*clucking* crazy?” Ellie said. A line of red crest had formed between strands of her purple dyed hair.

“What, are you *chicken*?” I asked. I realised I wasn’t sure if that insult even meant anything anymore, but thankfully, it appeared to be just the case. She gave me an angry glare she usually reserved for the cheerleading girls, teachers she hated, or Irvine.

“*Cluck* you. I’m g-game! Let’s m-move Irvine!”

“N-noow?”

He was forcing out his second egg, as was I.

“Why, s-scared? Is the lazy fat n-nerd gonna be tougher than - aaahhh - you?”

Again, he could not resist being the jock. The one to take action.

“Sh-shut up. Let’s g-get moving!”

We managed to shuffle through the crowd, avoiding the gaze of the labcoated individuals. It was arduous work, because every few steps one of the members of our trio had to pause and begin pushing, often only able to take minute steps when doing so. This act of pushing was accommodated by further changes, and it was clear that while the transformation had been slow going, it was accelerating the more our bodies laid their eggs and became ever more chicken-like. Worse, the urge to push was becoming increasingly . . . comfortable. The many moans, some of them quite sensual, from the large crowds only confirmed this. As our cloacas enlarged and our bodies swelled to match, the passage of eggs became easier. More than that, the feeling of ejecting gooey eggs gave a distinct thrill of pleasure, a low ecstasy that almost reminded me of how good it felt to finally contribute.

To produce.

I forced myself to rally against that alien feeling and soldier on, but it was clear that Irvine and Ellie were labouring under the same feelings of bliss at each ovipositional birth. The latter’s moans were high and feminine, and were edging ever closer to orgasm. I would have gotten hard at the mere sound of her sensual groaning, were it not for the fact that I felt the tiny stubby remains of my penis melt into the skin, quickly overgrowing with feathers to cover all evidence it had ever been there.

Not even male anymore. Not even a man. I have to find a way back.

Hot tears ran down my face, and I wiped them as best I could with my elongated fingers. The crowd was thick, clustered with not just large chicken-students, but dozens upon dozens, *hundreds* of large melon-sized eggs. But slowly, ever so slowly, the insanity was dying down. It became easier to move as our bodies became lighter, and while the pressurised feeling in my stomach never left - I half suspected my body was already beginning to form new eggs to replace the ones I'd just birthed - at least for now I had more mobility. The speakers continued to blare Dr M. Roe's voice as we left the field and headed to the mostly empty dorms.

'The eggs are laid and the game is back in play, faster than ever! Several members of our lovely staff are retrieving the eggs now, my my you have all been so productive! What good hens you are - so much more than you were before. The value of a good education, I suppose. The Reds are still up from the Blues, but anything could go and there are only four players yet to lay, so we'll see if . . .'

Her manipulative tone faded into the distance as we entered the dorms. Irvine laid the last egg. His haunches were even bigger than mine, though my belly was bigger - a consequence of being fatter from the beginning, I supposed. Ellie, meanwhile, had laid eggs the fastest and easiest. It made sense; most of the women had. A consequence of mutating from a body already equipped from childbirth, I supposed. I had left my last egg halfway off the field, a yellow-brown one that was smaller than the rest, and had made me almost caw with pleasure as it passed. I tried to forget that as we moved on. We were not particularly stealthy, but I figured attention was on the game, not us. That was good, because it was time to find out what was happening.

It was time to break into Dr Yarrow's lab.

Cluck's Ticking, Part 5: The Lab

Dr Yarrow's lab was indeed empty. We had managed to evade only two hall monitors. One had been easy, because she was doubled over, clucking in a maternal fashion as she pushed out her eggs. She was obviously a member of staff like Mr Hardy who was not 'in' on the operation. By contrast, we just barely avoid the gaze of the second; he was a lab-coated individual stalking the halls, a taser on his hip that looks to be one of high voltage. It was only thanks to Ellie's own cunning that we were able to distract him away: we no longer had phone coverage, but she was able to set hers beeping an alarm in one of her classrooms.

"That'll teach him to think he's smarter than this hen," she declared, fluffing up her feathers. It was a bizarre sight, and one I chose to ignore commenting on. Instead, I led us onward. A few weeks ago, we would have been a strange image; three half-chickens, two

former males, all of us hens, all of us waddling down an empty corridor. But perhaps just as strange in a different way was the fact that after procrastinating my whole life, being lazy and eating pizza and playing video games, I was finally taking charge of my life only now as my own humanity was slipping from my mother *clucking* grasp.

“Here we are,” I said, as we arrived at his lab.

The door was locked, but Irvine made quick work of it; he had not yet been deprived of all of his athletic strength, and it wasn’t hard for him to use a nearby pipe to wedge the door open.

“Nicely done. You’re not all brawn then. There’s still some neurons flitting about there.”

“Very funny, Ellie,” he said. The two didn’t really like each other, but I was able to use their competitive dynamic to keep them going forward. We stepped into the lab, having to go one at a time due to our widened bodies. My stomach tensed again - more eggs developing. The others were doing the same, but still we filed in.

The lab was no different to many university laboratory facilities: steel basins, clean ceramic tile flooring, and numerous cupboards containing specimens and elements and compounds. At the end of the room was a human skeleton, and it served as a cruel reminder how little my own skeleton resembled it; I could practically *feel* my spine bending, taking on the bent curve of a chicken. I shivered, putting that out of mind for now.

“So, what are we gonna do?” Irvine said, cawing a little impatiently. He scratched his talon on the ground several times. *When did he develop that?*

“Um, I hadn’t gotten that far.”

“I’ve got some ideas,” Ellie said, ever the rebel, even as a chicken woman. “Let’s graffiti this place up before we lay our next clutches. It’ll be rad. Also, I wanna steal the skeleton and make its bones part of my nest. It won’t be comfy, but it’ll be *clucking* awesome.”

I could feel my plan slipping away. “Um, that’s a great idea. But . . . you know, maybe we could also find the secret plan?”

They both turned, shifting their fat bodies to examine me. Their feathers rose and felt in curiosity and confusion.

“Secret. Plan,” Ellie said, her gaze unbelieving, and a little suspicious.

“It’s true!” I said. “I heard Yarrow saying there was something secret here. A plan cooked up by him and Dr M. Roe. Really dark shit, you have to believe me! I think there’s something here we can uncover that will expose them to the whole school.”

Ellie folded her arms. They were now heavily covered in feathers.

“Bull. Shit. What the *cluck* is this about?”

“I’m serious!”

Irvine just looked annoyed. "Secret plan? This is a normal school for hens like us! This is stupid. I can't believe you're making me miss the second half of the game so you can play nerdy spy shit. Dammit, and I was looking for a hot rooster too."

Goddamn, they're even clucking changing orientations!

"Seeya nerds, I'm out of here."

He shifted, began waddling away. My heart lurched, along with my stomach. It was falling apart already. I looked back at Ellie, who hadn't moved.

"I'm still playing the prank, but your shit is weird, man. I know you were some comic and anime-loving geek or whatever, but this conspiracy shit has gotta stop. This place is constricting and I want out, but it's just a henhouse, same as any other."

I knew better than to challenge her. As attractive as she had been as a human woman, she had still been intimidating to me then, and was just as intimidating now, full of eggs as she was.

"Yeah, okay, maybe you're right. But at least help me try something? I'll - I'll - I'll give you half my next load of seed food?"

That certainly piqued her interest. I realised I could pay into her new bird-like nature, and perhaps offer that as an incentive. She raised an eyebrow, and to my astonishment, her red crest raised a little as well.

"You serious?"

"I'm serious."

She seemed to consider it for a moment, caressing her swollen midsection slowly, almost maternally, and then arrived at a decision as she thrust out her hand.

"You're on."

I shook it. Even that was a weird feeling; our overly-long fingers made it difficult to shake. She held my fingers longer than was strictly comfortable, her level gaze upon me.

"Well, your move then, John. What are we looking for?"

"I . . . I'm not exactly sure."

She rolled her eyes, her feathers rustling. Mine rustled too, defensively.

"Something secret though!" I said weakly.

She turned, flashing her tail feathers in a manner I supposed was meant to evoke irritation, and began to move around the shelves, opening those she could, and using Irvine's pipe to break the locks of those that didn't give. I myself waddled, trying to ignore that feeling of growth in my womb, and headed for the bookcase.

We were searching for nearly ten minutes when I heard her grunt. At first I thought it was another egg descending - I could feel mine beginning to finish forming, and even that slight dilation of the cloacal opening that signalled a coming clutch - but in fact it was simply the fact that I was losing Ellie's support. She had taken to starting to graffiti the area,

clucking and cawing in approval, and at several points she found containers of seed that she partook in. Shamefully, I did as well. But the truth was, time was limited; it was clear we hadn't ejected all the eggs from our bodies, and several 'latecomers' were about to be due. Yet another maddening aspect of our cruel transformations.

"This is *clucking* pointless," I heard her snap. "Sure, at least I'm not getting hit on by a heap of clueless roosters out there, but snooping around for super secret 'plans' of some vague description is just as *clucking B'Gawking* stupid!"

It was a crushing feeling, enough for me to make my tail lower in shame. I almost didn't realise that I had done it until I swivelled my head back. My tail had function. Limited function, but function nonetheless. *This is getting too damn weird.*

"Hey! Are you paying attention or not, John? Just because I'm a bit of a nerd as well doesn't mean you get to give me the silent treatment and boss me around. I'm my own hen, thanks very much, and playing hard to get doesn't work for me."

I'd completely forgotten she was a lesbian. *Jeez, it must be throwing those mental changes for a loop now that everyone was a hen.*

"Sorry, I'm sorry Ellie. You are my friend, and I'm not trying to be weird about this. Look, you said you like to break stuff, and you often challenge authority figures. So *cluck* it, let's just break what we can, okay?"

She gave me a look like I wasn't even human. Which, strictly speaking, was true. But then, she smiled, and I was very thankful she still had the lips to smile with.

"*Cluck* yeah. Now *that*, I can get behind."

We quickly set to work, destroying what we could, shifting equipment to the floor, smashing down the skeleton (presumably for her coming nest, I supposed), and tearing at the books on the bookshelf. The last was my duty; I waddled over to the collection of old physical texts and pulled them in great stacks to the floor, hoping for something, anything hidden in the titles or even behind the old tomes.

Instead, I went to pull one backwards, and it halted with a loud mechanical 'click.'

I could have slapped my forehead. *How stupid. How clucking obvious when you're looking forward.* I felt like I had seed for brains, and the following notion that the changes could be dimming my intelligence simply weren't worth thinking on.

"Ellie, I've - ahh - found something!"

My stomach trembled, but she waddled over, curious, also clutching her large mound. We were damn close to another laying, and had limited time.

"What is it? Found your oh-so-secret pl- holy *B'Gawk!*"

B'Gawk indeed. We stood there, two increasingly fat chicken-girls - for I definitely was a girl, at least in equipment - as a doorway slid open before us. It was lit an ominous yellow, and led to an ominous elevator with a single down switch.

And a slot for a keycard.

“There *is* a secret lab. But what for? This is just a hen’s school, right?”

I shook my head. How do you convince someone whose very memories and understanding of the world had changed to believe in anything else? The only thing I had thought of initially was in using photographs, but even the photographs around the school had been replaced with fresher images of half-chicken people, and our phones had been wiped of existing images prior to arrival, and I deeply suspected the photos were remotely wiped, if mine was any indication.

“Well, the only way to find out is to go down and - UGH!”

I gasped, that tensing in my stomach.

“No - no no no noooogghhh! Not n-now!”

Again, my womb clenched, like several muscles spasming. The urge to ready my body came over once more. To bear down and push. It wasn’t fair. I was so close! The elevator - the doorway to truth - was right there! And now the very mutation that I wanted to undo down there was preventing me from accessing it. I grunted, and Ellie grabbed my shoulder.

“We’ll - mmhmm - go down there later. For now - ahhh - we both need to lay. That means getting the *cluck* out of here. We can pretend we were playing - Nggghghh! - games, okay?”

I nodded, but then the horrifying realisation hit me. The lab was a mess, and we had smashed a number of displays and the contents of cupboards.

“N-no! We’ve left t-too much evidence. Go down first, then I-lay up here.”

She looked at me like I was crazy, but I still moved forward, propelled by a need to find a cure. Ellie paused briefly, but even as a half-chicken woman, her rebellious streak won out. She waddled forward, pressing against me in the elevator. Weeks ago, before I found out she was gay, I would have loved to have been this close to her. But now it was merely awkward, her feathered belly pressed against mine, both of us grunting in low voices. I pulled out the keycard I had stolen and activated the elevator.

And then slowly, we descended.

“Time to f-find the truth,” I managed. The urge to push was there, but it had not reached critical mass.

Yet.

The same sickly yellow lighting dominated the lab downstairs. It was far more high-tech than the one below, dominated by strange machines, state-of-the-art computers, and numerous

diagrams and printed sheets on the tables. In an adjoining room, numerous chickens - regular-sized ones - were in pens with notes attached. It was a lot to take in.

“Okay, this is seriously weird,” Ellie said.

“Can you h-help me figure this out?” I asked. She was smarter than me, at least when it came to science stuff. It showed how serious she’d suddenly become that she gave a simple nod of affirmation before setting to work. Meanwhile, I looked through the computers; that was more *my* specialty. Thankfully, Dr Yarrow didn’t have anything in terms of password security; clearly he never expected anyone to remember they were never actually a chicken, or swipe a security keycard, or find this place at all.

“Arrogant b’gawstard,” I say, clucking part of the insult. I began clicking through several of the files, hunting for evidence of a cure, and also what was evening happening to me. To all of us. I ignored the tensing in my stupid chicken womb. Thankfully, as I focused all my attention on the secret files before me, it abated a little. I knew some chickens laid less or infrequently when they were stressed, so I could only hope that was the case here. It didn’t stop myself or Ellie grunting every minute or so. Distracted or delayed, the eggs still wanted out.

“Ngh . . . c’mon c’mon c’mon, let me find something. Anything!”

I clucked a little, clicking through file after file. For all his preening intellectualism, Dr Yarrow did *not* keep a neat file system. As Ellie poured over the strange notes, I eventually found a file buried deep, simply labelled: *Genecode Access*.

I clicked it, and suddenly there was a loud *PSSSST* from nearby. I jolted in shock, just barely managing to suppress the urge to push an egg through my cloaca, but Ellie was not so lucky; she cawed in surprise, and two large eggs exited her canal with a loud squelch, rolling onto the floor and beneath a desk.

“*Clucking* hell,” she managed.

Before us was a rack of chemicals, revealed behind a panel on the wall. Each was carefully labelled, and numerous colours of which were present.

“Memory Fixer? What does that mean?” Ellie said, examining a can.

I looked back to Yarrow’s computer, and saw that I must have accessed a number of files. These ones looked important, as they were labelled for his and Dr Yarrow’s eyes only. Naturally, I clicked on them, and read. And read. And read.

And read.

My eyebrows raised, my jaw dropped, and my heart seemed to stop as I absorbed the information within. Ellie was saying something, trying to get my attention, but I couldn’t look away.

Not with the truth in front of me.

“They’re turning us into giant hens,” I said. “To go to farms. To lay eggs for the rest of our lives for a damn *clucking* profit.”

Ellie looked up. “That’s *clucking* stupid. That’s what we’re *meant* to be doing.”

I looked at her, shocked. “You - you *knew* this?”

“Duh,” she said, rolling her eyes and fluffing her feathers, “what do you think all this education is for? So we’ve got something to think about when we’re locked in our boxes laying eggs for the rest of our lives!”

I put her comments out of her mind and kept scrolling. All the details of what was being done to us were detailed over several documents, and each of them told the same story; that Gallus Dee College was a lie. It had never truly existed. It was an experimental hub run by rogue scientists, kept aloft by massive agricultural corporations that did everything in their power to sweep the college’s actions under the carpet. In exchange, the island, headed by Dr M. Roe, provided transformed specimens of an incredibly altered nature to these industries. I flicked through various previous experimentation samples, and my jaw dropped.

“This is more than just chickens,” I said. A pit developed in my stomach, and it wasn’t just from the eggs that wanted release. It was from what came before.

Giant cows constantly overwhelmed with ludicrous milk production.

Goats with udders that scraped along the ground.

Powerful stallions and mares capable of winning any race, and breeding quicker.

Even impossibly large bees the size of chairs that secreted honey beyond all expectations.

All of them had been trialled and conducted and transformed and shipped. And there were still plans for the future, including a file named ‘meat delivery’ that chilled me to my core. In it, a number of files were designated, chief of them ‘Project Bacon.’ My stomach turned again. I decided to leave that one alone. Some things were better not seen. What I had seen was enough, including how they got away with it. Gallus Dee wasn’t some prestigious college, it was a place for the useless youth of society to be dumped and made into ‘productive’ citizens just as Dr Elizabeth M. Roe had said. Well, not even just youth; there were also numerous former teachers and staff members who had been transferred here who obviously wasted away in education. All together, we were a useless bunch. My eyes brimmed a little with tears as I realised what that said about me, and how true it was. I had been a lazy procrastinator, someone who wasted his life on video games, food, and being an introvert who never contributed anything to others. Just like how Irvine wasted his life pursuing women and never actually using his athletic skill for anything, or how Ellie’s intelligence was used purely to be anti-authority and commit vandalism.

We were all prime candidates to go missing. After all, who in society would care that we were gone, except for some potentially grieving parents who could be offered an easy excuse?

“Wait,” I said, realising something, “did you say - uugghhh - did you say ‘memory fixer?’”

Ellie looked at me and nodded. “It’s weird. It’s like it’s intended to restore memory function or something. But why would you need to restore a chicken’s memory?” She gestured to the small pen. “I mean, it’s not like we’re losing memory, right? Right?”

I gave her a blank look, and I could see the terror dawning on her face.

“We - I don’t understand. What the *cluck* is all this about?”

‘A reminder that all students should be on the way to class now, or returning to their dorms. Please stay out of unsupervised areas.’

It was the voice of Dr M. Roe. I cringed, trying to think what to do. There was no time to explain - suddenly there was that lurching again, and I had little time to delay laying any further now. Besides, this was only a lab - all evidence pointed to Dr M. Roe’s office as possessing all the major equipment. That was where we needed to go.

“I’ll tell you on the way back to the d-dorms. We need to get back. Take the memory fixer. C’mon!”

We moved together, waddling awkwardly with our loads of eggs back to the elevator. I used the keycard to go up, but I could tell Ellie was nervous. Terrified, even.

“What did you see?” I asked her.

She held her rotund stomach and whimpered at the pressure. “There were . . . biological recordings. Notes. About transformation and memory alteration. I couldn’t make full sense of it; but it was like they were experimenting on *us*. It’s *motherclucking* wild.”

I nodded. So she did understand a little.

“When we get back to the dorms, I’ll explain all. You can dorm with me for a moment. Irvine is barely in anyway. I know it’s the men’s dorm-”

“The what? The rooster dorm? There is no rooster dorm if that’s what you mean? We’re all hens.”

We’re all hens. My cloaca quivered. She wasn’t lying.

“Look, just trust me - uuhhhnnn - okay? Come to m-my room, and I’ll explain e-everything!”

She nodded, clearly a little overcome by the strangeness of the lab. The elevator shuddered to a halt, the black metal bottle still in Ellie’s hands. The one labelled Memory Fixer. I could only hope it would work. I closed the bookcase’s secret door.

“We need to hide our t-tracks first! Quick, b-books back on the sh-shelf!”

I was fortunate enough that I had pulled the books down roughly in order. I tried to remember their exact placing, but at a certain point it was little more than educated guesswork. Once we were done, we could already hear the footsteps of individuals approaching.

“I’ll take the blame for it!” Ellie said, handing me the bottle. She passed me a small packet as well, and it took me a second to realise what was in it; two syringes, filled with green liquid. “Some weird formula. It’s called the Chicken Virus. It’s usually a gas in their notes, but this is a faster acting version apparently! Don’t lost it. I don’t know what the *cluck* is going on, but this is crazy.”

“Thank you!” I said, barely able to take it all in. So we *were* injected or dosed with something.

“We’ll talk later. Just don’t lose those. I’ve got to lay these *clucking* eggs already!”

I hesitated, but she shooed me on. I could see from the look in her eyes that even if she didn’t understand what was going on, she knew something was up, and she didn’t like it. I waddled as fast as I could from the lab, panting heavily as the eggs began to slide into my passage. The urge to push was strong, but I fought it off for precious seconds as I rounded the corner and made my way around the hall, just in time to avoid the gaze of Dr Yarrow and two associates passing by, with several more carting mobile trolleys filled to the brim with heavy eggs. Ellie gasped inside the lab, already straining to push out the first of her next clutch, and they moved to intercept her, barking orders.

I was already gone, my own need to push now surrendered to, halfway across the college. I squatted, bared down, and began panting. Laying my clutch of large eggs. Finally knowing the dark purpose intended for me. As each pleasurable sensation coursed through my body with the exit of a fresh egg, and as each new feather pushed from my skin, each new pound of fat added to my body, I knew that I had to get to Dr M. Roe's office.

Cluck’s Ticking, Part 6: Memory Fixer

Nearly a week passed in desperation before I managed to meet Ellie again. She had been placed on 'internal suspension and enrolment review' as a result of her actions, which might as well have been prison for all it mattered. I was terrified that I would never see her again. Each day was misery, as I laid low (literally laying low too, as I squatted to push my eggs out), terrified that I would be found out and also taken in. I tried to act exactly as I would normally, but 'normal' had a new meaning now, and the changes just kept on coming. Each day brought fresh evidence of alteration, new feathers and bulging flesh that shaped me and all the other students more and more into the giant chickens we were destined to become.

My spine bent further and further, forcing me to hunch forwards, and my legs were undeniably those of a large chicken, with fat juicy thighs and scaly feet. My toes were now full chicken talons, long and sharp, and I had developed an instinctive habit of scraping them on the ground while idle. My entire body had widened, my stomach no longer recognisable as such; it didn't bulge out like a pregnant woman's belly anymore, but simply was part of my fattened frame, a large coating of feathers beneath it. My hands were mercifully spared, but the digits had grown longer, and feathers were still spreading. It would not be long before I developed flightless wings, and then I would be useless. My red crest had grown, and the skin around my mouth was getting cracked and hardened, but thankfully I was still largely human there, with all my mental faculties intact, barring a hunger for seed-based foods.

By the laying - oh God, the laying - that had only increased. It was as if my body was a production line, meeting an ever increasing order of eggs, continually growing more and more within me. Soon, my clutches were so clustered together that even as I ejected them from my passage with reluctant joy, I could simultaneously feel new ones already growing in my body. It was nightmarish, and the worst part was, the feeling of constantly producing, constantly being full, it was actually beginning to feel comforting. Almost natural.

Perhaps I was undergoing mental changes and just didn't realise it. Like a slower, more sinister version of what had happened to everyone else. Still, I hadn't lost my own tact in some ways; the bottle labelled Memory Fixer was hidden in my bed, and I moved it occasionally just in case my room was occasionally searched. I had inspected it over, but much of the scientific language was beyond me. Ironically, it was Dr Yarrow's class that seemed to help me understand further; his grasp of biology was worthy of his evil genius. Between layings, I attended, figuring out its purpose.

As best as I could tell, it was indeed a gaseous spray intended to overcome the strange mental conditioning we'd received. I didn't need it for myself - yet at least - but Ellie would require it. The two syringes she'd given me were not useful, yet, so I kept them on my person at all times, just in case the worst happened. I figured it was a small defence. I took to hiding them within my feathers, and keeping my coating firm against my blubbery skin. Anything to make sure Ellie's sacrifice wasn't in vain.

Which brings me to how she returned; with two lab-coated guards at her side.

It was late morning. Irvine had already left to go to the gym, though he wasn't even capable of lifting anything anymore, and I was alone. After five days, I had decided to break into Dr M. Roe's office. I couldn't wait on Ellie any longer; by the time she returned, if ever, I might not even have hands to help me. If there was a cure to my condition, it would be there. I was just readying myself, psyching myself up for the terrifying task ahead, having just laid a large clutch of pearly white eggs, when suddenly she was there.

"Hey, John," she said. Her eyes were strange, fuzzy almost. Blank.

“Ellie! You’re back! Holy *cluck*, I thought I’d never see you again!”

I waddled as fast as I could to her, pressing my feathered form against hers. She was along even further than me; a small crown of feathers was slowly replacing her hair. If you looked at her in the right amount of darkness, she’d probably just look like a freakishly large chicken.

“It’s me John, I’m back,” she said in an empty voice.

“I can see that. Look, we’ve got to get working. Did you tell them anything? Roe mustn’t know that -”

“That you intend to raid her office,” a voice came. My eyes widened. It was Dr Yarrow. The thin man rounded the corner to the doorway flanked by two figures in lab coats. Each of them appeared to have a taser device. I took a step back, clucking awkwardly. My body was large and could barely fit through the doorway. I had no idea how to get out of this.

“Ellie, you couldn’t have . . .”

She placed her docile eyes on me. “It was right to tell them,” she said, cawing a little. She scratched the ground with one of her talons. “We are only chickens. They are the humans. They are our masters. We serve them.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. As if to emphasise her point, she paused briefly, clenched her eyes, and out popped a large, head-sized egg, right there on the ground.

“You’ve done something to her. To all of us.”

“We have,” Dr Yarrow said, “we’ve made her what she should have *always* been. A productive member of society. And docile, so docile, instead of a cumbersome, destructive weight. But you interest me. Your brain, there must be some unique neural configuration. This has never happened before. Still, it won’t matter. Whether you retain your mind or not, you’ll just be a giant chicken soon. But first, I want that Memory Fixer back. And the syringes.”

I stepped back. The Memory Fixer was behind me, but he couldn’t know that I’d taped the syringes between my haunches below my cloaca. It was hidden by feathers there, and I doubted anyone would look closely unless inspected thoroughly.

“I flushed the serum,” I said, backing up. “It didn’t work. It didn’t turn me back.”

Yarrow paused, absorbing the lie. He chuckled. “You idiot. It’s the virus to *turn* people back to chickens, not reverse it. You’re just lucky it didn’t accelerate your change.”

I had to do something. Slowly, the lab coats entered the room, but Dr Yarrow stayed put, guarding the door. Ellie stood in the middle of it all, clucking to herself blankly.

“You accelerated her mental changes. Why didn’t you do that from the *motherclucking* beginning?”

A villainous smirk emerged upon his face. "Because we have our sociologists. The change is not just the only interesting area of study; the functions of memory and adaptability are just as worthy of study. And besides . . . it is fun to see the ignorant masses flout about with no knowledge of their fate. Like your Mr Hardy."

He gave a thin laugh, clearly savouring the moment. The two lab coats looked to him for orders, and I quickly used that moment of distraction to quickly pull the can of Memory Fixer from the side of the bed. Dr Yarrow's eyes went wide, and he moved to bark an order, but even stuck in a giant, clumsy form, I'd had practice. I sprayed its contents in the air, aiming the majority of it towards Ellie. She sniffed it in, cawing and clucking and raising her feathers.

"Seize him! The director will want to talk with him, I'm sure."

The two labcoats moved ahead, but even as they did so, I saw instant recognition come across Ellie's face. She gave me a wink, and I decided not to resist. She ambled backwards, clucking stupidly, pushing Yarrow aside a little. Only I could see that she took his taser from his pocket. No one else had even noticed it, focused instead on the two hands grabbing me.

Dr Yarrow seized the fixer.

"So, she was not alone when she visited my lab. Yes, we found her eggs down there. It wasn't difficult to make the link, and a quick test confirmed it. You were lucky you didn't lay any, but it didn't help you for much longer, did it? Come, we're seeing the good Dr M. Roe."

He pushed me in my feathered back - I had long since abandoned clothing as nothing fit - and I walked forward.

"Hm," he said, smirking, "that should have restored her memories. It appears your friend is simply too far gone, Mr Teeran. But don't worry, I'll make sure you retain your mind. After all, I'll be stopping by to study you in the pens as often as I can."

He gave another shove, and we moved forwards. Ellie dared to give me a single look, and we marched ahead.

Gallus Dee's facade was increasingly collapsing, not that the facade was necessary now anyway. I had spent much of my time indoors the last two days, only going out for Yarrow's lecture, and having food delivered to my dorm room. Any eggs I had were laid out in the corridor where they could be easily collected, but not require entering the room. Irvine, on the other hand, laid wherever the *cluck* he wanted. In all the stress, I hadn't really recognised just how insane the school had become, even more than the football game. Every student and staff member that wasn't in on the conspiracy were now effectively giant chickens, but

each still had enough of a mind that they were trying to recreate activities of ordinary life that were no longer possible to them. Even as Dr Yarrow muttered and jibed at me, my mind tuning most of it out, we passed dozens of unusual sights.

Chess players smacking pieces off the board accidentally due to their freaking feathered fingers.

A gym where most of the equipment was causing excessive frustration, with all the occupants complaining that it 'didn't work for their body type.'

A yoga class where every student was plopping out eggs at the conclusion of each pose.

Lecture theatres that were little more than laying rooms; great clucking chambers where numerous students watched videos of chickens making eggs even as they produced their own.

The upkeep of the school was disintegrating as well, the facade tearing apart. Thin, lab-coated members of the conspiracy were now wandering the halls openly, sticking out like sore thumbs yet seemingly invisible to people's weirdness radars. Teachers were struggling to deliver content, and numerous nests made of all sorts of junk, including ripped up mattresses, lined the hallways. As we passed one, I recognised Mr Hardy.

"Such B'Gawking bad behaviour, Mr Teeran! So disappointed to - caw! - see."

Even as he said that, he clenched his eyes shut and bore down. He looked content, cawing happily as egg after egg widened his cloaca, descending down into his makeshift nest of exam papers and rolled up carpets.

"I'm so sorry, Mr Hardy," I said, and I meant it. He may have been a shitty teacher, but he didn't deserve this fate.

He just smiled. "Well, once you've received your punishment, everything will be back to normal."

"I wish that were the case."

Another jab between the shoulder blades - the wing blades? I wasn't sure what the chicken equivalent was - and I lumbered forward. Ellie marched with us, occasionally interjecting some comment about needing to be "loyal to our masters." I wasn't sure exactly what she was planning - most of the time, she was quite spontaneous - but so far Yarrow had allowed her to move with us. Clearly to him she wasn't a threat. It was all me.

Or so they thought.

We continued shuffling forwards, heading towards Dr M. Roe's office at the edge of the island, where a great tower of stone had been linked to the more modern installations. Supposedly the island had once been a prison. *It still is*, I mused.

"Well, well, look at these two *cluckers* in trouble."

I turned - an action that was increasingly awkward given my large size and strange legs - to see Irvine looking at me with a smug face. A 'face' was about all that was left of him that was human. After he'd abandoned us and gone back to the game, he'd only been increasingly distant, wanting to avoid being kicked out of the 'easiest school he'd ever been to' by not being associated with Ellie. Which also meant not associating with me. I was just fortunate he'd been too stupid to rat us out, but he was showing his true colours now.

"Looks like someone's getting expelled," he said, scraping the ground beneath him. "A shame, I just got done making a pretty impressive nest. Was thinking of sharing it. I guess that won't be happening now."

I rolled my eyes. "Irvine, you have no idea what you're saying."

He clucked a response full of invective. "For that it's worth, John, you were pretty good for a roomie, even if you can't produce as many eggs as a hen like me can."

God, he's even establishing a henpicked order. Ha. It frustrated me to see him like this. Irvine and I hadn't been close, but he hadn't been awful either, even encouraging at the beginning. But with his mental degradation, the meaner streak seemed to be coming to the surface, the animalistic competition between members of the same egg-laying species. The desire to be the top producer.

"Well, I hope you enjoy it, Irvine," I said sadly..

He clucked a response, and for just a moment, I seemed to sense a sadness behind his eyes. Almost like he was aware briefly that something was wrong, but unable to figure out or articulate just what. I just reached out a set of fingers and shook his, however feathered they might be.

"Well, good luck then, John. Ellie. Hope you only get suspended."

He seemed to mean it, but fell silent immediately after, concentrating. I knew from the look on his face and the way his giant chicken body was shifting that he was getting ready to lay yet more eggs. He spread his haunches wide and began pushing, face going a little red.

"Ughhhh! Aahhhh - that's right! Come out my I-little eggies!"

The first began to descend, and I turned away, pulled forward by Yarrow. I could tell that Ellie was disturbed as well; she continued to fidget with her body, clearly grappling with the secret return of her memories. Twice, as we continued to waddle forwards, she rubbed her chicken belly anxiously, and trembled as she felt more eggs develop within. I can't imagine how she must have felt; it would have been like waking up after a bad dream, only to discover you'd been awake the whole time, and now it was a living nightmare. She gave no further indication that her memory had returned, and I was occasionally hit with the fear that it had receded again, until I saw those worrying gestures.

We arrived at a large red door, emblazoned in gold with the words *Office of Dr Elizabeth M. Roe, Director and Dean of Gallus Dee College.*

“Here we are,” Yarrow said with a smile. “Ready to meet the good doctor? I think she’s going to enjoy conversing with a real life chicken who remembers being human.”

He opened the door and motioned us to step through. Another ominous elevator awaited, one to take us to the very top of her towered office. We barely all fit in it. Yarrow flashed his keycard, activated it, and up we went. My stomach gurgled in anticipation, and in desire to lay yet again.

“Just don’t think she’s going to turn you back,” the sinister doctor said.

The elevator reached the top, and the doors opened automatically. Dr M. Roe was at her desk, a smirk on her features, already waiting for us.

“So,” she said, “this is our anomaly? Come on in, Mr John Teeran. Have a seat, if one will fit you. We have a lot to discuss about what you know, and who you might have told.”

Cluck’s Ticking, Part 7: Dr M. Roe

Dr M. Roe’s office was blood red, dominated by a curving mahogany desk and numerous book shelves along the walls. Several shelves stacked chemical equipment and other strange scientific apparatus were located behind her, alongside an electronic map of the school. And, most notable of all, was a large control panel, built into her desk. Numerous buttons of various colours lined its surface, and she adjusted one that I couldn’t make out. As she did, the map lit up, showing a particular quadrant. Numerous smaller blue icons appeared around it; it was the gymnasium. She must have seen that I understood it, because she spoke then.

“Yes, John, those are your classmates, being rounded up as we speak for a presentation of honours to finish out the semester.”

“You’re going to - uhhhhgh . . . you’re going to transport them, aren’t you?”

A smirk. “I am. Don’t worry, they won’t be harmed. Their lifespans will be just as they were. All they will ever know is the life of a chicken, living in a cage just large enough to contain them, where their eggs will produce mighty profits indeed for our agricultural partners.”

I shivered in horror. I shivered in response to the pressure inside me too. Somehow, just talking about eggs made my revolting, bloated body want to produce more of them. I clucked in discomfort without meaning to.

“But I don’t want to talk about them,” she said, adjusting the necktie on her bespoke suit and relaxing back into her chair. “I want to talk about you. You and that magnificent gift of memory you have. The same memory that will help me find those two missing syringes. Has he been searched?”

She shifted her cold gaze to Dr Yarrow, who coughed, clearly a little less maliciously confident in the presence of his master. "Thoroughly."

"In the cloaca?"

I shivered in disgust. They had indeed checked there, and among my eggs. It was good fortune that I had kept the syringes in their small packet, because its surface tucked it well within my lower feathers. Still, it had been a close thing.

"Yes. It was a thoroughly . . . discomforting affair, and not just for Mr Teeran."

She shrugged. "Well, if someone had followed the proper security protocols, then we wouldn't be here. Thank goodness for our Ellie here. Too bad about her mental degradation, but then this is the price we pay for profit and progress."

She smiled at me, and it chilled me to my churning core.

"So Mr John Teeran, where are my needles? You can understand, I'm sure, that I wouldn't like evidence of my little operation escaping from this island."

I cawed a little in response, feeling defensive. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Yes, you do. Ellie told us everything. We made her more compliant. Shifted her memories around, a technique that some accident of genetics has made you immune to. But she told us truth, we know that. I can tell you're lying, John. You're sweating."

I clutched my belly a little dramatically. "It's just . . . ohhh . . . the eggs. These damn *clucking* eggs. You've turned me into a B'Gawking animal and now you blame me for not - Nggh! - coping well!?"

A thin smile passed across her features.

"Very well, you may lay now."

"What?"

"Go on. We're collecting samples now anyway. Lay. Now."

I squatted down and pushed, but it wasn't quite time yet. The eggs were not yet ripe. Somehow, along the way to becoming a giant chicken, I had developed a sixth sense for knowing when to lay, just before the real pressure started. I strained, but nothing came.

"As I thought," she replied. She stood, moving away from us, and leaning close to inspect Ellie. For a mere moment, it looked like the doctor had guessed Ellie's game. The older woman leaned and held Ellie's still-human chin, examining her remaining features yet to be swallowed up into chickenhood. And then my friend simply clucked loudly, squatted, and pushed three large eggs out of her body, which rolled across the floor beside a disgusted guard in a lab coat.

"S-so full of eggs. I am a *clucking* good producer, unlike th-this hen," she said, straining a little as she pushed a fourth, even larger egg from her body.

Dr M. Roe smiled, and there was nothing kind in the expression. She turned her gaze back to me. "See? *That* is what a chicken about to lay her clutch looks like, and what a good chicken she shall make, especially when she sires the next range of chicks."

"Ch-chicks?"

"Of course, you didn't think we would be allowing our halls to be covered in feathers and goo for the foreseeable future, did you? No, our next venture will be altogether more . . . radical. Our corporate partners want more protein, more egg, lighter costs, and no pesky investigations by the press. But more than that, they want *long-term* profits, and that means having a sustainable population." She waltzed over to the safe located behind her head, input a quick keycode, and quickly opened it. She drew out another syringe, this one darker in liquid than the others. "Of course, every rooster is a hen slot wasted, so it's important that the male inseminator is *very* virile. Enough to sire over a hundred hens, our total population of them in fact. I had intended to use this on one of the footballer males - they already possess the virility - but I suppose I could use it on your *friend* here."

I tried to step backwards, but my bulbous tail simply hit the wall. "You - you wouldn't!"

Another slasher smile. "Oh, I would, John. You have no idea the things I'm capable of. You're not escaping your fate, but if you don't give me what I want, then this will be the stick. I'm told it acts quite quickly on those well into the transformation process. They can become violent, dominating, powerful. How would you like to see your female friend reduced in that manner, hm?"

I looked to Ellie, and was astonished. Perhaps I had simply imagined the wink. But no, she still had a taser on her person, I was sure of it. *But her expression is still so dull . . .*

"Please," I bargained, "she's a good person. She doesn't deserve that."

A soft chuckle from Yarrow. "Tell that to my lab."

"Indeed," Roe added, "or the many places she has graffitied and ruined with her reckless behaviour. Such intelligence, so wasted by her life choices. And now she is a dull mind, thoroughly outwitted."

"You can restore her. Give her a cure. Then I'll tell you who I sent the syringes too."

That got her interest. Clearly, the thought of the truth getting out terrified them. They had no idea that I didn't have the slightest idea on how that would be even achieved. She turned, reached into the safe, and withdrew another needle, this one a shimmering blue.

"A cure, you say?"

I could feel my still-human eyes gleaming as she presented it with an exaggerated flourish. Somewhere, outside the tower, a bolt of lightning hit the sea, and a roar of thunder accompanied the great waves against the island.

"A cure?" she said, illuminated by the blue flash of light. "No. There is no cure, John. Not even for one as peculiar as you."

Another flash of lightning, another howl of thunder that accompanied the same rending that took place within my soul. I waddled, my scaly legs balancing my bloated prison of a body, the immensity of fat, the enormity of the eggs within me. The full horror of what was happening to me finally hit me, the inevitability of it, and tears began to brim in my eyes.

“Then . . . what’s that?” I asked, trying not to sob pathetically. The lab coats and their two masters were not moved by my tears. Not one bit.

Roe flourished the chemical in her fingers. “A re-agent, of sorts. Think of it as a stabiliser. Something that will blend your human and chicken form into something new. A hybrid. A new species entirely, one with restored memories and the ability to maintain speech, potentially. You would still lay eggs, but you would still have your hands, too. It is the best I can offer.”

I greedily reached out, but she pulled her hand back at the same time as two of the lab coated guards tugged me back by my thick feathers. I clucked and cawed in anger. In desperation. It made Yarrow chuckle, but Roe rarely laughed. She was ice cold.

“All of this, of course, could be yours, John. Or it could be Ellie’s should you wish to save her. Hell, I could even make your friend Irvine the rooster of the pack. I could even give him back his memories for all the good it would do him; at least he would still be the . . . how did he put it? The ‘alpha male of the pack.’ I’m sure he could . . . make your time comfortable. You two would be the only ones in the entire hen house with memories of what you were; there could be some comfort in that, I’m sure.”

The storm roiled around the tower, dark clouds brewing closer and closer. I felt as if I were trapped not between a rock and a hard place, but two endless chasms. I couldn’t do anything but caw, shifting from talon to talon, trying to not let the two syringes fall out from between my thighs.

“Time’s running out to choose, John,” she said, holding a syringe in each hand. “Do you wish to become, if not human, then able to retain some humanity? Or do you do the selfless thing and save your friend’s mind? If the Memory Fixer didn’t work, then this is the only thing that can restore her. But that would curse you to a life as a giant chicken - thinking and feeling, certainly, but a chicken nonetheless - with your friend fucking you so that you are forced to raise his little chicks.”

She stepped right up close, and pressed a finger against my bloated underside. It made my womb tense, feeling a strange invasion of its taut surface, where more and more eggs were developing. The meaty flesh was still developing there; I swear I could almost feel the crest atop my head surge up a little, as if signalling the horror of my change to come.

“What is it going to be, John? Tell us, and I’ll let you choose your future, but your options are limited. And your time, hm, your time is running low.”

Rain hit the windows, the storm arriving in full. The windows shook a little, absorbing the impact of the storm. It was as if the sky itself was aware of the drama, and echoing the thunder in my very being. The storm of indecision.

But I had to decide. And as much as I wanted to be free, I knew I had to do the right thing.

“Save Ellie,” I breathed, clenching as yet another egg shifted inside me.

“Is that your final decision?”

“It is.”

“Good *clucking* choice John.”

All faces swivelled to Ellie, who was already moving, a dark smile on her face as she shifted rapidly to the side, knocking over one of the security guards. Yarrow reached for his taser, only to freeze as he realised it was gone.

“My taser, it’s-”

BZZT!

It was all he managed to say before Ellie thrust it in under his chin. His body shook, collapsed in a painful tremble. Dr Roe leapt backwards, a syringe flinging from her hand to land behind her desk. I swivelled, large heart racing. I may have become a chicken, but I would not *be* a chicken, even if I was terrified. Adrenaline coursed through my system, and I embraced the more bestial impulses the changes had given me. I leapt at the remaining security guard, knocking him aside, even as I pulled the syringes from my body.

“Yarrow, you idiot!” Roe screeched as she ducked backward. “He had the syringes the entire time!”

She grappled at something in the safe, and somehow I *knew* it was a weapon. I ran as fast as my fat, bloated body was able, but someone grabbed at my leg. It was Yarrow.

“You stupid chicken! I’m going to vivisect you and find out why you’re-”

I ripped one of the syringes from the packet and jabbed it straight into his wrist. He howled in agony, horrified at what I’d done.

“N-no! Noooo!”

Ellie was grappling with the security guard, both of them brandishing tasers. He was more mobile, but it appears the taser had less effect on her bulk. I barrelled forward as best as I was able, squeezing past the desk to claw and kick and even peck with my goddamned teeth. Roe whipped round, a gun in her hand, and the blue needle in the other.

“Last chance John! Back off or I kill you. And you’ll never be human again!”

“*Cluck* you!”

I didn’t care anymore. I slammed into her, and she fired. A great wet chunk of flesh was bitten off my shoulder, and I howled with her. For just a second, a flash of utter terror appeared on her face, helpless and pathetic, as I rammed the syringe into her forehead. She

fell to the ground, weak against my weight. She scrambled, ripping it out, but we could both see the syringe was already empty. On the other side of the room, Yarrow was already screaming as his body warped and he begged for food. Feathers erupted from his skin, and a tail jutted out from his pants, ripping the waistband apart.

“No! This c-can’t be happening! This can’t be *clucking* happening! B’Gawwwk!”

The change was so much quicker. So much more concentrated. The kind used for when sociological study was no longer their interest. I couldn’t help but grin as Yarrow screamed in transformation, turned into his very own helpless creation, a prisoner of his own mind.

“You’ll be n-next,” I wheezed to Roe.

She looked at me with utter contempt, a hatred beyond rivalry in her eyes.

“You’ve only set me back. I’ve got enough riches and wealth to get my body back. It’ll take - oohohhhh - time, but even a chicken lady can buy silence with *my* power.”

I realised then what she was about to do. She pulled the blue syringe back dramatically, and I leapt forward to stop her.

“That’s Ellie’s!”

We tumbled, me pushing her over the desk, and her struggling to inject herself with the serum. My fingers were weaker than hers, but my larger chicken form possessed a strength she didn’t. Before us, Ellie and the remaining guard attacked one another, trading blows. An egg ejected in the middle of it, and somehow the insanity of it made me laugh. I must have looked terrifying to the doctor.

“You won’t w-win!” I screamed.

“I w-won’t be a *clucking* chicken!” she returned, but already I was winning, pulling her arm backwards and freeing the syringe.

“Ellie! Here!”

She managed to down the guard, tasing him right between the legs, but it left her with a nasty shock of her own. She limped forward, the proverbial dust settling around us.

“Nicely done, John. Looks like you’re not useless after all. Good job with that Yarrow creep.”

Said ‘creep’ was currently writhing, screaming for sustenance and half-dragging himself out of the door in search of it. Already, his stomach was bloating up, and his clothes were ripping apart to contain his expanding flesh. No doubt soon the egg production would begin.

“Nicely done yourself,” I said, still holding Roe down, and clutching the blue syringe victoriously in my hand. “You should have been an actor.”

“I should have been. What now?”

Beneath me, pinned against the desk, Roe was already developing chicken-like features. She trembled and grunted, cheeks red with anger and humiliation as she was turned into one of her own products.

“Now, you take the half-cure. You deserve it.”

She gave me a soft, compassionate gaze. It was the first such I’d seen from her. It had a sincerity and openness to it that was at odds with her usually combative and defensive nature.

“That’s not true John. You’re the one who saved us.”

“You did as well!”

“But you figured this all out!”

“Only because of some weird brain quirk. Please Ellie, I’ve procrastinated and lazed about my whole life. You’ve at least done things. And I want you to have it. Please.”

Tears brimmed in her eyes, and an eternity seemed to pass. Finally, she gave a nod, and stepped forward on her talons to take it from me.

“Oh, *cluck!* What the *cluck* was that!”

She’d stepped on something. Glass or debris or -

“A syringe,” she said. We both looked down. In the insanity of the fight, we’d all lost track of the rooster formula. Now it was sticking to the underside of the foot.

And it was empty.

“Oh shit,” I said. The pressure in my core gave way, and I struggled to push out an egg at exactly the worst moment. It emerged from me, rolling on the ground, the only sound other than the rain and the storm.

And, of course, Dr Elizabeth M. Roe’s mocking chuckle.

Cluck’s Ticking, Part 8: All Hen Breaks Loose

The moment seemed to drag out, long and steady, as if we were all caught in slow motion. Ellie and I were both stuck, staring at the needle impaled in her foot, its dark green contents empty.

“That’s - that’s the rooster formula, isn’t it?” she said.

I couldn’t even answer. I could only nod, not even meeting her eyes. The syringe was *there*, and there was not fixing it. It was too late.

“No way of stopping what’s coming, th-then?” she murmured, seeing my despair.

Roe groaned, the changes overcoming her body faster and faster.

“Oh, there is *one* way,” she managed, her body swelling. She writhed, reaching for the blue syringe again, but it was well outside of her grasp. “You can - Uugggh - you can save *me*, and I’ll find a way to save *her*.”

“Yeah right, bitch,” Ellie said, already clutching her own form. It seemed to be altering, swelling in a different way. “Like I t-trust you! I’d rather spend my l-life as a rooster.”

“I’ll use the syringe!” I said, holding it up to her. “It should turn you back.”

Roe gurgled something darkly humorous to herself. I already suspected that it wouldn’t work, but I was desperate. I extended my hand out to her.

“Please,” I repeated. “Save yourself?”

Already I could feel my belly churning, but I knew it was nothing compared to the immensity of change she was about to undergo. Already she was shivering, her flesh visibly rippling. Her legs appeared to be extending slightly, thickening, making her become even larger. Ready for her dominant role. I could tell she was scared; her normally cool look was replaced with uncertainty, her eyes flickering around.

“Please,” I said one last time.

Slowly, careful on her new, rather large legs, she stepped forward, large talons shifting over the electrified and unconscious personnel. Roe shook and twisted, body swelling. She groaned as eggs began to form within her, and pathetic tears fell from the once-triumphant woman’s eyes as her quills extended, large dark feathers forming to cover her pale skin.

“You won’t - UGGH! Won’t get away with this!” she screamed, baring her teeth even as her mouth hardened, the early beginnings of a beak. “I’ll m-making s-sure of it! I have - OOHhh ahaahhhh - I have powerful friends!”

“Shut the *cluck* up already!” Ellie declared. Roe looked up, utterly indignant as her clothing ripped from her, but the second she did Ellie’s hands were upon her.

“Take your *B’Gawking* hands off me you disgusting little-”

Ellie’s arms, even beneath the coating of feathers, rippled with growing muscle. She thumped Roe’s head down upon the desk hard, instantly knocking her unconscious, and causing her body to bounce almost comically on the floor. Her transformation continued, now unabated, and her white lab coat and shoes snapped and sprung off her form as her transformation into a chicken continued. When it finished, I knew from experience, she would be hungry, just as Yarrow was.

“Damn Ellie, that was-”

She interrupted me then, still moving with focus. I barely had time to register her grabbing the needle before she pressed my own hand against my chest, plunging it in deep.

“Ellie, what the *cluck!*”

She didn't say a word, just left the tears to brim in her eyes. She pressed her thumb on the end of the syringe and pushed down. There was a brief sting, minor in the grand schemes of things but its ramifications all the more painful, as the fluid injected into me and began coursing through my blood.

"There, now it's too late to argue," she said, sweating over her still-human face quite profusely. Her body bulged in strange places, and she spread her haunches a little to compensate with her clear discomfort.

"You - it might have worked."

A flash of lightning, a roll of thunder. She managed to wipe away a stray tear.

"It wouldn't have, John. We both know it." She gave a defeated smile. "I'm going to become a chicken. A male chicken. The directions life take you, huh?"

"There still might be -"

"John, just *clucking* stop, alright? It's okay, I'll find my peace with it. You just take care of me, okay? Of all of us? You'll be the only one that can."

I nodded, and in that moment I knew I would. I had shunned responsibility my entire life, but I couldn't shun it anymore. Not when I would be the sole speaking member of over a hundred transformed students. Someone would have to speak up for them, to agitate on their behalf.

"I will, I promise."

"Ahhhggh . . . g-good. Because we're n-not out of the woods just y-yet."

She pushed the unconscious body of Roe aside, leaving the control panel before us. There were numerous buttons, and normally it would have required password entry. Thanks to Roe's own hubris though, it was unlocked, though it would take some figuring out.

"They'll be c-coming for us," she said, gasping a little as one shoulder beefed up, making her appear almost hunchbacked, asymmetrical. "We n-need to do something."

"Like what?"

She smiled, and tensing as more and more muscle packed onto her body. "Like *cluck* them over like they *clucked* us." She placed a hand, already extending to become a wing, on my shoulder. "Th-think you c-can do that, John?"

"I can try. I promise that - UGH!"

I doubled over, clenching my stomach as it shifted. Something was happening. The blue syringe was taking effect, and with such bad timing.

"Are you ch-changing too?" she asked.

"Y-yeah. Feels d-different. Like I'm g-getting s-smaller."

"That must be - ahhhh - n-nice. I feel like I'm d-doubling in size. Oh god, I can feel a *clucking* dick forming. Jesus *B'Gawking* Christ, I'm growing a dick!"

She widened her stance, and sure enough, she was growing a large cock. My eyebrows raised: I didn't know lots about chickens, but I knew for a fact that roosters barely even have tiny nubs. They basically just rub against a cloaca and called it a day. It's basically the equivalent of finger-printing sperm on someone, without any of the actual fun. But Ellie was developing a large, rather impressive member, half-sheathed in feathers, the other half red-skinned and almost human-like.

"*C-cluuuuuuck!* It's h-huge! What the h-hell!"

"It is," I said, tensing as my body was compressed further. I looked over the control panel, I wasn't sure how much time I had. Already, even in the storm, I suspected confusion was setting in. A phone on the wall rang, and I ignored it. I clutched my belly, groaning as more eggs ejected from my system. It felt like a purging, a prelude to yet more change to come, and I noted that Ellie was experiencing the same: she cradled her enormous sides, straining at each egg that plopped from her form.

"Oh G-G-God!" she cried. She screwed up her expression as she bucked her hips madly. I could see why; the next egg was massive, and to add to the discomfort her penis was still swelling outwards, a gigantic member. My cloaca quivered just at the sight of it, and that thought terrified me. She noticed me looking, and gave a pained grin.

"L-like what you see, huh? It feels pretty b-big!"

"It is," I said. I looked down, trying to bring all my computer expertise to the fore. I was no hacker, but I definitely knew systems. I tried to ignore the strange pressure in my chest, the throbbing of my nipples - hell, just the fact that I apparently *had* nipples again!

"Who kn-knows," Ellie stammered, pushing her seemingly last egg out, "m-maybe I can get used to this. I'm still a total lesbo, right? I j-just have a dick. And all those h-hens. I'll have my pick of the hen-house, ha!" She giggled as she mused on the potential positives. Her other shoulder wrenched, making it as large as the other. Her crest rose, lengthening even as her feathers became longer and more brilliant. "Ah, shoot. So m-much muscle. I can feel it, John. It's like a drive to be strong. Or to be in ch-charge. This thing really is doing the thinking already."

She indicated to her large penis, which was hardening against her belly. She cawed, voice lowering.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"I - I think so. Don't have much of a choice. Damn, are you growing tits, dude?"

I looked down at my feathery chest. My body was slimming, and each egg I pushed from my cloaca only shrunk it further. But as if to compensate, a pressure was building behind my re-emerging nipples, and it manifested with a growth of two curves of flesh. I was growing tits.

"*Cluck*, I think I am." I clutched my throat. My voice had gone up an octave.

We looked to each other, neither knowing exactly what to make of the other; she about to become a giant rooster, me about to become - well, who knows what I was becoming. *A chicken girl, perhaps? Something human enough to talk, right?*

Suddenly, an alarm blared across the facility, and we were bathed in deep red flashing rays.

'ALERT. ALERT. SYSTEM COMPROMISED. ALL STAFF MUST SECURE STUDENTS SAFELY FOR TRANSPORT AND SECURE THE CONTROL TOWER.'

"Shit, we don't have - ahhh! - long!" Ellie said. Her voice was even huskier now. The change was accelerating; even her face was slowly starting to change shape.

"I know, I know," I replied. I pawed at my breasts - they were still aching and apparently still expanding, starting to possess a weight on my chest. They were probably only B-cups at best, but they seemed huge from my perspective, particularly since my feathery coat was thinning, the quills becoming shorter and more delicate, leaving them to adhere to my increasingly feminine curves more and more.

"Find out how to s-stop them!" Ellie said. Her hands were beginning to mould into wings properly, her size getting even larger. She flapped her wings, adding to her agitation. I looked over the controls, trying to decipher their meaning. There were so many codes I didn't understand.

CLA. PPT1. BBRY. BBY. ABY. ADM. MF1.

It was all total gibberish. I decided to simply apply what knowledge I did have of such layouts, if I were the techie in charge. The most common keys would be below, within arms reach. The top ones would configure map settings. I clicked a few at the top, and my suspicions were confirmed. That would make the guarded colour buttons the most significant ones. *Uugh!*

I gasped as my throat thinned, and my breathing sounded increasingly like that of a quite feminine individual. My breasts surged forth, and my hips receded, leaving me with a set that looked rather womanly. My tail pulled back into my form, leaving only a small feathered protrusion - almost a Daffy Dusk-esque behind, albeit that of a chicken woman's. I groaned as my cloaka thankfully split apart, becoming a female vulva and regular set of ass cheeks and anus respectively. It was a bizarre sensation, and only confirmed that while I was becoming humanoid, I was staying all-female, that was for sure.

'ALERT. ALERT. SECURITY BREACH DETECTED IN DR ROE'S OFFICE. IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION REQUIRED TO REGAIN ORDER. SECURE ALL TEST SUBJECTS AND READY FOR EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION.'

"H-hurry up, John!" Ellie called. I looked up, and gasped. On the map, the lights that represented the entire student body, and those of the transformed staff, were being herded away towards what could only be the docks. I moved to the window, my fingers altering to

human-like proportions so I could see out into the blustering storm. The wind whipped at my feathers, and it made me caw in discomfort, but out to my left I could see it; an immense ferry, its size easily allowing it to stay upright even in this storm. It was pulling towards the dock, readying to take on board its cargo. I had little doubt it belonged to the agricultural corporations, greedy for their profits at any cost.

They'll take Irvine. Mr Hardy. Ellie and me too. And all the rest. We'll be laying forever, stuck in some dark hole until our chicks replace us.

My gut trembled in fear, and I realised it too was still making eggs, though probably slightly smaller ones now, or at least less of them. My feet were still talons, but my leg structure was humanoid. I was regaining some control of myself, but the actual situation was spiralling far out of control.

"People are coming!" she called. Her head was getting bigger, skull reforming to become that of a chicken's. "I d-don't have long!"

I raced back to the controls, trying to move as fast as I could. It was amazing how agile I felt compared to my previous chicken self, even if I was still growing a big pair of boobs and probably still looked pregnant with twins. I returned and looked at the screen, ignoring how my chest continued to grow, and how my buttocks and legs were becoming strangely shapely. Even the feathers on my head were longer; there were indeed patches where my pale, bare skin was now shown as well; on the back of my thighs, on my nipples, and apparently my face was largely free as well.

"Can you keep them distracted?" I asked, my new voice an almost sweet soprano.

Ellie groaned, grunting as the final part of her transformation began.

"I c-can . . . try," she muttered. She gave me a grimace, and we both realised in that moment that she was mere seconds away from fully transforming into a rooster forever.

"Ellie, I'm s-sorry."

She shook her warped head. Feathers grew in rapidly, overtaking much of her face. Her lips hardened, not yet forming a large beak but on the very verge of doing so. A single tear fell from her left eye, which was in the process of shifting to the other side of her face.

"It's okay, John. It's okay. I'll h-hold them off. You j-just make sure I g-get plenty of hen action - uhn! - okay?"

I gave a sad smile. "I will. Promise."

"And l-lots of seed. The best k-kind, I need it so damn bad!"

"The best seed donuts around."

"C-cluck yeah," she stammered. "Now hurry up and save our t-tails, okay!"

"Yes, sir."

She gave a ridiculous winged salute back, and with that, her transformation rushed towards its final conclusion. Feathers surged forth from her scalp as her eyes shifted to

either side of her head. Her mouth bulged forth, and her tongue briefly looked utterly constrained by this new formation, sticking out, until her beak formed, the skin becoming a hard shell, splitting into a new configuration. Her rooster's crest rose, tall and ridged and bright red, and a long wattle that was equally as red spilled from her throat. Her tail jutted out, developing a marvellous flurry of feathers, sticking out far, several of them tinged an emerald green. The last of her humanoid shape dissolved as her back hunched yet further. Each change was accompanied by a powerful squawk, a caw, and several low clucks.

Finally, there Ellie was. *He* was. A powerful, giant rooster that was perhaps seven feet in height, all muscle and fat and power, with a large cock dangling between its leg.

"COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO!" he screeched, and as he widened his stance, two more eggs barrelled out of his cloaca.

"Holy *cluck*," I said in my new feminine voice, something I was only just getting used to. "You're - you're hermaphroditic! You're still developing eggs!"

The new rooster cocked its head sideways and turned around, jumping a little. It squawked again, squatting its body to push yet another egg from its large body. It cawed in irritation; clearly Ellie wasn't a fan of maintaining the egg development.

"Have you kept your mind at I-least?"

It nodded several times in an exaggerated fashion.

"Thank God. How does it feel?"

But the former woman was already pecking powerful against the desk, indicating to the buttons.

"Got it. Deal with this first. Can do."

There was a burst of shouts, and we both twisted our bloated bodies in the direction of the noise: the elevator! In all the insanity, I hadn't even realised it had gone down, but then I suppose Yarrow had to have gone somewhere to feed his gluttonous new chicken body. And that left the way open for security guards to rise back up . . .

"SQUARK!"

Two of them raised tasers but were instantly overwhelmed by Ellie's massive new rooster body. She scratched and clawed and pecked and shredded at the two men, causing them to retreat back into the elevator, terrified. The doors closed. Ellie turned back to me, and while she could no longer grin, the ruffle in her feathers made me believe she was pretty proud of herself.

"They'll be b-back," I managed to say. The pressure in my pregnant belly was returning. The eggs were not as big as they had been, but it seemed my body was still cursed to make them; that familiar tensing in my womb to lay was ever-present. I clucked as I pushed that thought to the side and got back to the control panel. The security guards had been easily startled, but they'd soon be back, and in greater numbers.

I continued to play with the switches, my eyes continually shifting to that map. *Shit, there are new dots in the theatre.* It could only mean one thing; the boat arrivals were now entering Gallus Dee College, and were moving to secure the chickens. And because of their damn memory-induced stupidity and docility, they'd be as easily herded as trained cattle.

"Damn it!" I said. I caressed my belly, trying to think what to do. I almost wished Ellie hadn't knocked the evil director unconscious. Her form was lying, fat and already slowly developing eggs, off to the side. "I'm not going to end up I-like you w-wanted me to!"

I looked over the panel again, trying to form connections. I had made so many so far, but it felt like I was hitting a damn wall now that everything was on the line. Ellie turned to me; we could both hear the elevator returning up on its old winch, and it was obvious that more would be coming. Roe would win, somehow.

"I c-can't see a way," I said, struggling against the urge to push, "it's all in some code or . . ."

And that's when I realised it. The solution was obvious. Simple, even. Just difficult to discern under stress. I may not know Roe's system of organisation, but one thing a life of computer gaming and repair had taught me was that all systems have a basic structure. I pulled back the keyboard, ignoring the controls for now. It was still logged in, and the command files were present. The entire registry of keys connecting their basic function to the computer system, right down to where they operated.

"So c-close," I said. I crossed my thick chicken legs as much as I could, trying desperately to hold in the large eggs slowly shifting downwards towards my passage. My vagina now, I supposed. "Just - uuuuhhhhhh - need one more - ahhhh - second!"

The elevator door opened, and a skirmish and series of yells and squawks and rooster calls erupted. On the map, numerous lights began shifting en masse, towards the immense ferry waiting to take them away. And a massive egg began to strain and stretch my vaginal passage, unwilling to wait any longer.

But I was able to ignore it all, because I'd found what I was looking for: a school-wide dispersal of gas that was used to trigger the transformation.

And a damned *clucking* regulator to determine its strength of dosage. I hit *MAX* and pumped the gas, in every room, overriding even the safety protocols for this one. With a grin, I hit the red button that so classically ignited the starting sequence.

"Yippee-ki-yay, cluckers!" I yelled, as the security guards ran towards me, having bombarded Ellie.

They made it to within three feet of me before the gas powered through the pipes, green and misty and so damn concentrated they were changing before they hit the ground.

"You alright, E-Elle?" I asked through it all. My own body hadn't changed.

There was a large set of footfalls, pushing through the changing personnel. Ellie emerged, the giant rooster a little worse for wear but otherwise okay. More than I could say for Roe's men, who were clutching themselves as they altered. Ellie gave another rooster call, then pecked at the screen. I looked up and saw that the lights had stopped moving, and were now all changing colour, becoming the same blue as all the chickens.

"We d-did it," I managed. "We s-saved the d-day. Sorta."

She cocked her head to the side and kicked at the bottle of Memory Fixer. Clearly, the job wasn't done in her mind.

"D-don't worry," I said, gesturing with a feathery, long-taloned hand, "I'll g-get to that in a m-moment. But f-first, I need to lay these *c-clucking* eggs."

I bore down squatting, and the sweet ecstasy of pushing out eggs came over me, even more blissful than before.

Cluck's Ticking, Epilogue: Eggs Ever After

I did manage to pump the Memory Fixer through the air after I laid my eggs, though I certainly had quite the clutch backed up; more than I realised. Ellie too; she was definitely hermaphroditic, and ever since she's been laying, much to her chagrin, though at least not as much as the 'true' hens. But once the Fixer was piped through the school, the entire complex was chaos. It took a good deal of effort using the PA system to calm the hens down, and to get them to understand that their changes were irreversible, until the experimental blue syringe was reverse engineered. Unfortunately, that wouldn't happen for a while; Yarrow was identified by his tie still being around his large chicken head, and he was pushed off the docks into the sea to his death by a swarm of angry ex-football players. Several of the lab technicians joined him before Ellie and I could put a stop to it.

Really, the whole thing could have collapsed were it not for two factors. The first was that I was now the only speaking individual in the whole school, and that comes with a pretty significant power. Others took a long time to make their meaning clear using pecking and scratching signs on the ground, whereas as the world's first and only anthro-chicken woman, I was able to direct and even give orders, particularly when it came to the dispersal of seed food that they all craved.

The second was Ellie herself. She still insisted on being called 'she', despite her enormous rooster cock. As much as the students had got their minds and memories back, their instinct still ran very chicken-like. Hen-like, even. Wherever the former rebel went, the hens clustered around her, their eyes clearly gazing at that monster penis with more than a

little lust. Ellie's own instincts were in play too; she was more dominating, more willing to be the centre of attention, and more able to 'strut her stuff' without being the snarky outsider. The fact that she now had over a hundred potential girlfriends or at the very least willing 'lays' was also a clear draw. And so when she pecked at them, or moved them aside, or shushed them into listening to them, they fell in line.

Between us, we made a pretty good team, and once we'd ordered the school and locked away Roe and her ilk into large chicken cages - the very kind that she'd intended for us - we flagged the authorities to come and rescue us. That had been a hard sell, but enough video footage was sent that they felt compelled to investigate, particularly since a prominent corporate businessman had disappeared off the map (he was in Cage 44).

While we waited for the government to come and sort us out, we made do with our new equilibrium. Obviously, we were all upset that we couldn't change back, and more than a few were jealous of my new form, though it certainly had its downsides on my end; the ridiculously big F-cup tits that leaked milk, for instance, or the fact that while laying pleasurable, my vaginal passage was not as easy to lay through as a cloaca, necessitating more effort. Irvine was not jealous of me but rather of Ellie; it was clear my former roommate felt he deserved to be the alpha male of the chicken of the brood or flock or whatever we were. Unfortunately for him, he was destined to be a pregnant hen for quite a while, and even worse, it was clear that he had become perhaps the most fertile of the bunch; his stomach was nearly twice the size of any other hen, and his clutches repeatedly yielded over eight or more eggs, and more often than others.

In the end, the feds arrived, and the second they found us, they called for backup. We had been laying eggs during the whole storm and into the calm, and our production hadn't let up. More than that, the instinctive urges of many of the hens had been given over too; Ellie had already fucked a number of them with her penis, and judging from her attitude, she was enjoying visiting it on the lusty hens who needed it within their cloacas, despite the fact that many of them had been students who bullied her in the past. No doubt Ellie was enjoying fucking the alpha bitch cheerleaders who used to make fun of her.

More agents arrived, and we were all gradually transported off the island using the same ferry that was supposed to take us to our doom. Instead, it had become our salvation, the barge taking us to the mainland in order to process us, determine our identities, inform our families, and gather as much testimony as possible for a case against the corporations responsible for this. Roe and her minions were intended to be imprisoned, but she rolled on them as soon as possible to secure a deal; unfortunately for her, the feds did not grant her all she demanded, as they were able to play off her scratched messages as poorly miscommunicated. As such, she was left with our lot, as were her allies, standing before an

angry group of hens that ostracised them, and a dominant Ellie who was looking forward to showing them who the real boss of the hen house was now.

We were eventually relocated to a new area; a wide open farmland in the midwest, where great ranges of pastoral lands are available. The federal government used money seized from the corporations indicted to build us a large sanctuary, a giant chicken community we could thrive in, living our lives laying clutches, pecking seed, and generally being intelligent chickens. They even gave us computers for translation and entertainment, constructed to accommodate our difficulties.

Well, their difficulties. I myself could function more like an ordinary human being. I could travel, walk, talk, sing, dance, and do most of the things humans could do, even if I had to lay my eggs once to twice a day. I maintained my perpetually pregnant belly, and had to deal with the unnecessary annoying of leaky milky tits on my chest. Initially I wanted to wear clothing, even girly clothing, to try to fit in. But with all my feathers, and with the inability to tell when exactly in a day I would birth my eggs, it was easier and more natural to go *au naturale*. Can't say my parents were too happy, but I was a new woman, and they had to accept that.

Just like I accepted my place at what we called the Gallus Dee Farm. Occasionally I travelled, but for the most part I lived with my fellow hens, staying close to Ellie and even Irvine, and my many other chicken brothers and sisters. Someone had to speak on their behalf, after all, and work with the government to bring grievances, requests, and to organise egg shipments; after all, we *were* making a large profit. Dr Roe had not been wrong - eggs were indeed a big business. She knew as much as we did; she was the other prime producer, her body always full with eggs, her reluctant clucks of pleasure when she squeezed them out of her becoming music to my ears.

"Uuuggghghh!" I groaned, bearing down. It was a big clutch, I could tell. They felt positively massive inside me, but then they always did; I was squeezing these things out of a damn vagina, instead of a more comfortable cloaca. The price of being part-human still, I suppose. "Oohhhh!"

My lower lips stretched as the first egg passed through, sliding onto the straw nest and causing me to gasp. I had little time to breathe before the next descended, stretching me wide once more. I panted heavily, smacking my lips, and in general just being thankful that I *still had lips*.

"OOhhhh, oh *cluck* this is a big one!"

Again, that squeeze. Again, that urge to push. I was well used to it now, but sometimes the motion still surprised me, especially since it often set my tits off, causing them to leak milk. I had a maternity bra on; one of the few concessions to clothing I sometimes allowed, in order to deal with that particular problem.

“Mmmhmm! Oh God, just get ouuuut!”

Another push, and a large brown egg descended. It was pretty big, and it caused an explosive orgasm as it passed. That was indeed the best part of egg-laying; the fact that while there was a lot of pressure and discomfort in the act, it always sent me over the edge by the end. Another egg shifted downwards, and I clucked with contentment. This body never ceased to amaze me.

A hen clucked a welcome as she walked passed, and I clucked back. I was pretty good at imitating bird sound by now, and from her return cluck I had interpreted her ‘good morning’ appropriately, and responded accordingly as well.

“M-morning Jacob,” I said, “that’s a good c-clutch you’re carrying. I’ll see you at the m-movie tonight.”

Another cluck, and she shuffled off happily. Jacob had been a footballer once, but now was pure hen. She was one of Ellie’s favourites, having no less of a libido as a pregnant hen than she’d had a manly football player. More than that, she was pleasant company. She wasn’t able to play videogames anymore, but apparently had always liked them, and sometimes we got together just so she could watch me play. That was, when she wasn’t squeezing out her own clutches.

I dealt with the last egg, wailing a little too loudly in my nest as I pushed it out. It wasn’t totally my fault, it did give me a *tremendous* orgasm. I cleaned myself up, then dealt with my large jostling boobs by letting them suction against the machine for a while. The milk wasn’t necessary and served no real purpose as far as I could tell, but was simply a byproduct of my body thinking it was proper pregnant, instead of just egg pregnant. As such, I simply sold the milk; there were a number of demands for it, and apparently it was rich in good nutrients. That at least made it feel worthwhile.

Once that was done, I stood and stretched my scaly legs, and set out from my nest. I regarded myself off at one of the public mirrors on my side of Gallus Dee Farm. Occasionally, I was struck by the need to do so, to affirm my strange looks, even a year onwards. My feathers were still that mix of brown and black, with the occasional orange-gold peeking through. Atop my head was a red crest, but equally red hair spilled to either side, human-like. I didn’t style it much; it naturally fell in straight lines that looked good enough. My face was largely bare of feathers, but I had full lips and feminine eyebrows, as well as a soft jaw. It was undeniably a female face. Most of the rest of me was covered in small feathers that outlined my generous curves. I had a small tail that pressed out from -

appropriately enough - my tailbone, and I could even wiggle it slightly, causing the larger feathers to flourish. I won't lie, it had managed to entice a few men on my travels around the world in the past year. There's always something for someone, after all, and even a bizarre anthro chicken girl has her needs to be met, especially given that my body was naturally lusty. And it wasn't a bad body either; after laying, my stomach went down to merely pudgy for a spell, and combined with my head-sized tits and hourglass figure, along with the wide hips and overall exotic bird-girl look, there were certainly some men that liked a little 'lay' as I liked to call it.

"Well, I like the way I look," I said to myself, turning in my reflection. "Time to go see two friends who must be pretty happy with themselves too."

I moved through the chicken colony, clucking and cawing hellos and admiring the eggs of numerous other hens. Roe and her minions would be in their cages, under community punishment, ironically locked in actual chicken coops, but they were not the ones I was intending to visit. No, today I wanted to look my best, so that I could congratulate my friends on their own radiant, glowing success.

Ellie and Irvine were located at the edge of the farm, and a small crowd of hens had already gathered around them. The large rooster shooed them off, and they obeyed, still under the spell of Ellie's powerful manly dominance. Her own egg-laying hadn't stopped, but it was more than made up for by her ability to see to the needs of the many, many hens who lusted for her at least once or twice per week.

But there was one in particular she enjoyed servicing, and that was Irvine. The large, pregnant rooster was currently gasping, clucking and scratching her nest as she pushed her largest eggs yet out. It had taken time for Irvine to accept her fate, but given her own pride and ego, it had taken less time than I would have expected, purely because she realised that as the most fertile and egg-filled of the hens, she was now the alpha female. Certainly, her previous connection to Ellie made her the rooster's favourite.

"Ellie, Irvine, it's good to see you both. Has it happened yet?"

They looked to me, their chicken eyes belying their human intelligence. Both shook their heads, but beckoned me to come closer. Excitedly, I moved up to them. They were pressed against each other, not exactly lovers, but not exactly distant either. Perhaps simply content. Irvine's nest was easily the largest, and over a dozen eggs were currently situated in the middle. They had been there several weeks. Ordinarily, the eggs were taken a day or two after at the longest, but these were a little different. Enough, in fact, to make Irvine ruffle her own feathers in pride. She gestured to the one nearest me, and I stared in fascination as it shifted.

"Holy *cluck*, it's starting," I said.

Ellie squawked, the powerful rooster beaming. Something moved within the egg, poking and prodding at the thick shell. I gasped, the anticipation building. Suddenly the shell cracked, just a little, near the top. A small beak poked through, followed by a small hairless face.

“Hello there, little one,” I said. I felt new eggs developing within my own belly, and wondered what it would be like to have one that could hatch as well. Perhaps one day. But for now, I congratulated my two friends.

It wasn't exactly a happy ever after, a life of breeding and laying, but it was far better than it could have been. No doubt there were many, many more eggs to come.

And perhaps a few more chicks as well.

The End