

## A Time of Green

### Characters:

**Eric/Brooke:** busker – violin player (name depending on who is cast in this role).

**Chuck** – a chicken. The smartest and the leader of the two. He can babble sometimes.

**Picard** – a chicken. Ex-battery. Not the smartest chicken in the coop and of few words. He's a bit damaged by his experiences at the battery farm.

*Note: I have envisaged that the chickens will be played walking upright as humans, and that the actors simply embody chicken-like characteristics in their walk, mannerism, energy, speech, etc. It's a great opportunity for the actor to really think about what kind of mannerisms they can use to demonstrate that they are a chicken, without resorting to clichéd squawking on the ground with their hands in their armpits. Not dissimilar to the way the Enchanted Bottom is often portrayed by the actor to embody ass-like qualities in A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

*Curtain opens and we see a busker playing a violin in a park. This is **Brooke**.*

*The light in the park goes green and then daylight again. **Brooke** looks up curiously, then down despondently at the meagre collection of coins in her violin case. She sighs and puts down her instrument. She pulls out a sandwich and sits down on the park bench next to her...*

*Enter two chickens joined together by a rope.*

**Chuck:** You know I *really* hate dogs. Big ugly things. All feet and nose...

**Picard:** They stink.

***Brooke** throws the chickens some bread from her sandwich.*

**Chuck:** Do they ever! Like rank meat and something else... can't quite put my finger on it...

*He picks up the bread **Brooke** has thrown and eats it.*

Much obliged Mam!

**Brooke:** *(without thinking)* You're welcome.

**Chuck:** *(to **Picard**)* Urine!

**Picard:** What?

**Chuck:** The smell of dog – there's nothing quite like it...

*There is a pause while they eat. **Brooke** is now staring at them both in disbelief.*

**Brooke:** ....did you just say something?

**Chuck:** Sorry?

**Brooke:** You spoke! You just bloody spoke!

**Chuck** *(to **Picard**)*: What's she on about?

**Picard:** You did. You said "much obliged".

**Brooke:** Chickens don't speak!

**Chuck:** Don't we?

**Brooke:** Not that I heard.

**Chuck:** Well I'm talking aren't I?

**Brooke:** Yeah but ordinarily they don't. Chickens do NOT talk.

**Picard:** Yup, she's right. Our kind and the big pink featherless ones don't talk.

**Chuck:** Hey, you're right! Normally they just kind of \*bubble\* don't they?

**Picard:** Rasping noises.

**Brooke:** There's two chickens talking!

**Chuck:** Well this is interesting indeed, *very* interesting...

*He approaches Brooke...*

**Brooke:** Talking chickens! And coming over!

**Chuck:** Mind if I sit down?

**Brooke:** ...er...Go ahead.

**Chuck:** (*pointing to the sandwich*) That's real nice, what is it?

**Brooke:** It's a sandwich – oh, would you like some more?

**Chuck:** Ooh! Don't mind if I do! (*He gives some to Picard*) Much obliged. What's your name?

**Brooke:** Brooke.

**Chuck:** Brooke?

**Brooke:** (*nodding*) Brooke.

**Picard:** Beerooooooke! (*calls it like a chicken crowing*)

**Brooke:** What's wrong with your friend?

**Chuck:** Oh don't mind him. He's ex-battery. They're all like that. You can tell 'em a mile away. Beak job, enlarged breasts, clipped nails... and the mind... woo-oo (*he makes a movement to indicate that Picard is not all there*). We don't really talk about it. Egg shells under the nest as they say. I'm Chuck by the way.

**Brooke:** Chuck?

**Chuck:** Chuck.

**Picard:** Chuck!

**Chuck:** Chuck.

**Brooke:** Chuck?

**Picard:** Chuck.

**Chuck:** Chuck.

**Brooke:** Nice to meet you Chuck. And your friend?

**Picard:** Picaaard! (*calls it like a chicken*).

**Chuck:** Say, that's a fine sandwich you got there. What's that white bit? It tastes familiar...

**Brooke:** It's chick... er... Chutney.

**Chuck:** Hmm... how did you come by one of those?

**Brooke:** I bought it across the road.

**Chuck:** Bought?

**Brooke:** Yeah, you know. You give them money and they give you what you want.

**Chuck:** Money?

*Brooke gets up suddenly and goes to her violin case to pick up some coins. The sudden movement startles Chuck and Picard, who flutter gently away...*

**Brooke:** Sorry did I startle you? Look, money...

**Chuck:** (*incredulous*) You gave them those little things and they gave you a whole sandwich!?

**Brooke:** That's how it works.

**Chuck:** So you could buy more sandwiches with all those other ones?

**Brooke:** Well, a few more. Not as many as I would like. Frankly it's been slow all week. It's this spring weather. Rain one minute, sunshine the next. People don't know whether to go outside or not.

**Chuck:** And how do you get those money things?

**Brooke:** Well, I play little - like this - and people drop them in my violin case. It's called busking.

**Chuck:** Hey that was nice, do that thing again.

**Brooke:** This? (*She scratches a little more on her violin. The noise causes Picard to crow quietly.*) Well, it's not very good at the moment because I just broke a string. You can't really do Bach justice with one string missing.

**Chuck:** Bach?

**Brooke:** Bach.

**Chuck** (*to Picard*) Bach?

**Picard:** Bach?

**Chuck:** Bach?

**Brooke:** Bach.

**Picard:** Bach?

**Chuck:** Bach?

**Brooke:** Bach!

**Chuck:** Bach?

**Brooke:** Bach! I guess I shouldn't be surprised that you don't know who he is. Only one of the greatest musical minds the world has ever seen or heard. Why do you have that rope tied around you?

**Chuck:** This? Oh, it's a long story. You see we was in the coop, and Picard somehow, god knows how, found his way on the other side of the fence. And there he was. Panicking. Screeching - weren't you Picard?

**Picard:** Yup.

**Chuck:** And of course, what can I do? We're cousins and all, and yolk is thicker than water as they say. So I have to fly over the fence. Fly! You can imagine how tricky that was.

**Brooke:** You don't fly so well.

**Chuck:** I have better talents. So it took a few goes, but I finally managed get over. And Picard's a *mess*, and I'm thinking, "how the hell are we going to get back in?" Picard can't remember how he got out there in the first place, running around like he's headless or something, weren't you?

**Picard:** Yup.

**Chuck:** So, I find this rope just lying on the ground and I lasso it round Picard. Then jimmy the next bit to myself, to stop him running away see? And here we are. (*To Picard*) Did you just lay an egg?

*Picard shakes his head guiltily (because secretly he has).*

**Chuck:** So there you have, unable to get back in. Fated to roam the world together. Bound as yolk and white. And I won't leave him. No never. Bless him.

*While Chuck is talking, Picard removes the egg he's just laid and quietly lets it roll away unseen...*

**Brooke:** That still doesn't explain how you got to Albert Park. Something tells me this is a long way away from a chicken coop.

**Chuck:** That's where it gets interesting! We're standing on the side of the road, about to cross, and one of those big, square noisy things with the hollow inside, marches up and stops right beside us...

**Brooke:** "Big square noisy thing" ... you mean like a... truck?

**Chuck:** Truck?

**Brooke:** Truck.

**Chuck (to Picard):** Truck?

**Picard:** Truck?

**Chuck:** Truck?

**Brooke:** Truck!

**Chuck:** Truck?

**Brooke:** Truck, yes.. .it's a, big square noisy thing. Hollow inside.

**Chuck:** One of those.

**Brooke:** Right, well what happened next?

**Chuck:** Inside, we find all this feed. Loads of it! Feed to feed an army of chickens.

**Picard:** Feeeeeeed.

**Chuck:** Yeah you liked that didn't you?

**Picard:** Yup.

**Chuck:** And there's one of the featherless ones – that's your lot – is carrying some of it out and taking it inside one of the caves...

**Brooke:** I expect you mean a building of some kind. Carry on.

**Chuck:** So we hopped inside the big hollow square thing. Eating away, and next thing you know, the big square noisy thing closes its mouth and we're stuck inside!

**Brooke:** Someone shut the door.

**Chuck:** And then there's a rumbling - and we're swaying and bumping around, and it *roars*. Oh, poor Picard was in a right flap. I was none to happy myself.

**Brooke:** Then what happened?

**Chuck:** Well, then it goes silent. Just like that. And the mouth opens and one of the featherless ones appears – that's your lot – scoops up some more feed and disappears. We see the open sky and we make a run for it. Low and behold here we are. And we've been here ever since. But we like it here don't we Picard?

**Picard:** Yup.

*The light around them goes green and then becomes normal again...*

**Chuck:** Ooh, there it is again Picard.

**Brooke:** You noticed it too? It's been doing that all morning. The light goes all funny and then it goes right again.

**Chuck:** It's a very special time.

**Brooke:** What do you mean?

**Chuck:** Does it not strike you as odd that we are here talking like this?

**Brooke:** Of course it does. But it's surprising how easily things slip into every day.

**Chuck:** There was an old rooster back at the coop. He was nearly featherless like you. He knew a thing or two, and he said that many years ago man and animal used to talk *all the time*. And some men knew how to turn into animals, and some animals could bestow magic wishes onto men, and sometimes some animals were actually men enchanted to look like animals!

**Brooke:** About five minutes ago I might have said that sounded like a fairy tale, but carry on.

**Chuck:** Well, the old rooster said that over the years man lost his ability to talk to beasts and turn into animals and all that. No one knows exactly how it happened, because it all gets passed down from chook to chook, and chickens as you know have notoriously bad memories, and what they can't remember they usually fill up with some nampy pampy about the sky falling. But that, as we all know, is a load of *crock*, because the sky can't fall because it's not really there. It's just a scattering of sunlight by air and gases. And beyond that there are galaxies and existences beyond our imagination. At least that's what my mum said anyway...

*He pauses as the light goes green again and then normalises.*

**Picard:** Again! Again!

**Chuck:** It's getting closer Picard, you're right. I would say the time is almost upon us.

**Brooke:** What *are* you talking about now?

**Chuck:** It's just like the old rooster said. Man may have lost his ability to talk to beasts and turn into animals and all, but the seed is still there. There's a tiny grain, ever ready to flourish once more. If the conditions are right. And today, if I am correct, the conditions are *perfect*.

**Brooke:** For what?

**Chuck:** For you and I to swap bodies.

*(pause)*

**Brooke:** I... beg your pardon?

**Chuck:** Oh not forever. No, it would be less than a day for sure.

"When the light is green and the shadows unseen  
and the minstrel's song is broken  
beast and man, once hand in hand  
may to the other be taken."

**Picard and Chuck together:**

"When the green has passed, and the shadows cast,  
and all that's said is spoken  
the souls of each, once more complete  
to the body floaten."

**Chuck:** That's how it goes. And now is the Time of Green. We can really do this, you and I. Just like the old times.

**Brooke:** I don't understand what you mean! You mean I'll become you and you'll become me?

**Chuck:** Yes, but you'll keep your own mind. It's only the bodies that transfer. Or is it the mind that transfers and the body stays? I forget. Any-hoo-how, I'll get to experience a little bit of what it's like to be you, and you'll get to experience a little bit of what it's like to be me. And for that experience we both become richer and closer.

**Brooke:** I dunno... seems weird.

**Chuck:** You'll be fine. You can scratch the dirt, pick for grubs. Picard will look after you.

**Picard:** *Picaard!*(calls it like a chicken)

**Brooke:** *(She ponders for a moment)* Will it hurt?

**Chuck:** um...no. *(he actually has no idea, but doesn't want to put Brooke off)*

**Brooke:** What will you do?

**Chuck:** Me? Oh I'll probably cross that road I expect.

**Brooke:** Cross the road? Why?

**Chuck:** Ever since I was a youngun', I've had an irresistible urge to cross a road. I can't explain it. I expect I'll buy a sandwich. Picard's had it too haven't you Picard?

**Picard:** Yup.

**Chuck:** So what do you say? Please decide quickly; the time is almost upon us!

**Brooke:** Well... alright then! I suppose life IS about experiencing everything it has to offer... But don't you go spending all my money. What do I have to do?

**Chuck:** Pluck out one of my feathers. Ouch! That's right. And I get one of yours...

*He pulls out one of Brooke's hairs.*

**Brooke:** Now what?

**Chuck:** We eat.

**Brooke:** You could have told me this before, I would have picked a smaller one!

**Chuck:** Quick eat! The light is going green again...

*Light goes green again. They quickly eat their respective bits...*

*...hurry!*

**Brooke:** It's hard to get down...

**Chuck:** Oh, I almost forgot: don't go getting yourself savaged by some dog or something. Otherwise I won't have a body to go back to and we'll stay like this forever. If in doubt, head for the trees.

**Brooke:** OK! Got it! Oh god I'm feeling fuzzy! Oooooooh!

**Chuck:** It's happening! Can you believe it Picard? – It's really happening! Haha!

*Final green flash and stage blacks out.*

*Silence in the blackness.*

*Light slowly rises to reveal **Brooke** slumped against the park bench apparently unconscious. There is no sign of **Chuck** or **Picard**. Just a discarded rope.*

*She rouses and slowly rises and looks down at herself. She picks up the rope and looks around confused and dazed.*

*She spies the violin case and picks up a few coins. Then it dawns on her – it worked!*

**Brooke:** Picard!

*Immediate Blackout.*

The End