

“Chicken?”

① “You ready for the parade then?” I look up and gasp in shock. Dad’s wearing a chicken outfit and looks like some American basketball team mascot. Bright red and orange feathers and worst of all, under his arm, a huge chicken head. “You ready?” he repeats as he somehow manages to squeeze his oversized get-up into the car. I nod, speechless. I’m still getting over the fact that there is a large grumpy chicken in the driver’s seat. Only an idiot with a death wish would ask Dad what he thought he was up to.

② ⑤ ⑥
⑤ “Dad! What are you dressed up like that for?”

② “Not my idea. Blame Jess,” he says grimly. “It’s a protest against battery chickens. For Blossom Parade.”

① “Oh... well.... that explains it”. One word slowly thrums in my head.

① **Shame...Shame...Shame.**

⑥ Blossom Parade is the one day in the year that Templeton is actually full of people. It’s during these parades that our town comes alive. Garlands of flowers in bloom are hung along the rooftops. Every business seems to be open yet everyone’s are out on the streets generally having a great time catching up with everyone and having a bit of a laugh. It’s really noisy and colourful with people everywhere.

⑥ Dad pulls our battered blue Suzuki into a carpark and goes off to meet up Jess and the others waiting on the corner. I can already see the floats assembled in the park so I head over to have a closer look. They’re beautiful and it seems that everyone in town has put one in. When I finally get back from my tiki tour around the floats, I see that Dad’s still busy talking to the others. For some reason Jess looks really worried, then she looks over at me.

② ⑤ “There you are! Hurry up and get this on!” snaps Dad as he throws me a chicken costume! It turns out one of the chickens has pulled out at the last minute. “No way Dad! Don’t make me do this!” I squawk in horror but Dad just gives me one of his looks.

⑥ On the trailer stands a large cage and inside the cage are our battery hens, Raelene, Tracey and Hana pressed against the bars. We, the ‘free range’ chickens, strut in bright costumes beside the float, our red and orange feathers glowing in the sunlight. Suddenly I realize no one knows who I am and I begin to enjoy myself. Still it’s hard to focus with the screaming crowd that surrounds us and children that dart out to touch the floats.

③ We are already halfway through the town when suddenly a leg stretches out before me and before I know it I’m flat on my face. Looking up I see a guy my age sniggering down at me, surrounded by his creepy mates. As I stagger up, he sneers “Let’s see ya do the Chicken Dance” and then suddenly he shoves me backwards. All of a sudden I see the bully being knocked off his feet by ... Super Chicken Guy! The crowd goes crazy with excitement!

④ Of course it only takes seconds for the cops to arrive. They handcuff Dad and then lift the chicken head off. Dad stands there in the middle of Templeton with hundreds watching him. He doesn’t care. Nobody picks on his baby! I go to stand beside him then with a grin slowly spreading across my face, I take off my mask too.

⑥ ⑦ Once the police finally release us the sun has done its job and is nicely tucked into bed below the horizon. The day has taken its toll but what I have gained from it is invaluable. Dad turns to me. “Ya feel like KFC?” he asks.