

CHICKENS

A HUMERUS TAIL

By

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74,174 Words

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Richard Prosser 1998

CHICKENS – PROPOSAL

Herewith is a brief synopsis of a 74,000 word manuscript entitled **Chickens**.

This Young Adults/humorous mainstream/popular novel, set in a fictional, magical, and pre-technological world (comparable with mediaeval Britain and Europe) is the story of a burglar on the run who takes a position as odd-job man at a druidic monastery in order to escape the law.

This is the first episode of a saga running to six titles. The first sequel, entitled **Geese**, is intended to be around 100,000 words in length, and is, currently, approximately half complete.

Though not intended as a children's book, this story will appeal to readers from ten or eleven onwards, up to and including their grandparents.

I see this saga as appealing to a fairly wide, generally English-speaking audience.

I also believe it would translate to film quite well, more because that is how I see the story in my mind's eye, than because I have any knowledge of the film media (which I don't, other than two days as an extra in *Lord of the Rings*).

This novel will strike a chord with those who enjoy a good honest laugh, a tale of adventure and misadventure, bad guys, good guys, a struggle (and victory) against corrupt authority, Druids, dragons, magic, mayhem, blocked drains, and a talking cat. Oh, and a flying carpet, of course.

Imagine if you will something not entirely unlike *Harry Potter*, but with added sex and drugs; added, that is, in a very subtle sense, and intended to retain good taste, humour, and the audience.

This is also a story on several levels. On the face of it, it is simply a ripping yarn; a lively story, some engaging and sympathetic characters, and a lot of fun.

But there are other threads to be found as well, for those who can recognise the signs, and care to go looking. This saga uses humour to tell an adventure story; but running parallel with the adventurous journeys of the main characters, is a subtle yet insightful look at the inner journeys of those same characters, and of the society in which they live.

Though I don't pretend to emulate them, I enjoy, and look for, fiction by such authors as Terry Pratchett, Tom Sharpe, Philip Pullman, and Douglas Adams. Readers who also enjoy such stories will find themselves right at home in this hilarious, gripping, fast-paced romp, as an unwilling hero bumbles his way through a sticky situation, using ingenuity, cunning, lots of luck and the help of a couple of odd companions to eventually win the day - and get the girl.

CHICKENS - SYNOPSIS

The story begins when Colon, a burglar, accepts the position of odd-job man at the local monastery in the town of Hamfist. Downriver from Khonland, on the banks of the Numbolt River, it is a colonial town founded by pioneers from the Old Country.

Here, the Druids, despite their magic powers, are unable to get the drains working properly. Colon is happy to disappear into cloisters in order to escape the attentions of the local Sherriff, but soon discovers that the Druids are engaged in their own battle with authority - The Accumulator Fiscal, a tax gatherer and administrator for the Pzar, and his assistant, Spleen. As brewers of beer, vegetable growers, and purveyors of herbal medicines, the Druids are big business, but nonetheless are no happier about paying tax than any of the rest of us. When the Accumulator Fiscal attempts to tap into the Druids' lucrative egg trade by instigating a Chicken Tax, the Druids respond by making the chickens invisible.

Infuriated, the Accumulator Fiscal vows to form his own magical order to overthrow them.

Enlisting the help of Bearded Iris, a witch, he kidnaps Brother Equidae (a Druid who has gone mad since losing his mind in a game of cards), and attempts to trick him into revealing the Druids' magical secrets.

It falls to Colon to rescue Brother Equidae, the prospect of which terrifies him, and on which he is not at all keen - until the Accumulator Fiscal's men also kidnap Colon's girlfriend, Lucy, planning to use her as a human sacrifice in the interests of pursuing their magical intentions. Colon sets out to rescue them both, with the help of Balance, the monastery's cheeky, clever, ever resourceful and downright likeable (and, as it turns out, immortal) domestic Dwarf, and Vermillion, the ArchDruid's talking cat.

They are assisted by Hector, the Bishop's donkey, who has a particular fondness for honey-glazed carrots, when he isn't helping in the editing of the Druids' Herbal Compendium. After a roller-coaster adventure with a nail biting finish, the good guys of course win, the bad guys get their come-uppance, and Colon even redeems himself in the eyes of the law.

Running as sub-plots are Colon's struggle with the Monastery's drains, where the cause of the blockage turns out to be something nobody expected - it is Tremble, the Monastery's Gnome, who has been trapped in the sewers for three hundred years since being accidentally flushed down the privy, after a party held to celebrate the Hamfisters' joint victory with their allies and trading partners, the Khons (a warlike but fun-loving people) in the War of the Pigs; and the story of Bernice, the Druids' pet Dragon (she heats the bathwater), who eventually finds love.

I have subtitled this book "A Humerus Tail" as a reference to a sub-theme running within the nomenclature used in the story. As the "tail" unfolds, we meet such characters as Colon, the hero, and The Accumulator Fiscal's second-in-charge, Spleen the Accountant. Two of the Accumulator's soldiers, Lieutenant Sphincter and Corporal Mucous, join the Accumulator's magical order, along with the hopelessly camp Larynx the Clerk, and Appendix the Night Porter,

who comes to rather a sticky end.

At one stage, Spleen is required to disguise himself; obtaining a dress from Mrs Navel's Costumery and Milliner, he masquerades as a certain Mrs Ovary.

This sub-theme continues through subsequent episodes, and it becomes apparent to the reader that it is a reference to the influence of the Great Aerth Mother, on whose body our fictional world exists; the Aerth Mother who is, of course, the embodiment of the Lady whom the Druids serve in a spiritual sense.

In **Geese**, the first sequel, the by-now-vanquished Accumulator Fiscal makes his reappearance as the Pzar's Ambassador to Khonland. By this time, quite barking mad, he is bent on revenge and world domination.

Balance and Colon embark on another adventure, escorting Urethra (a young student from the Old Country) to Khonland, in search of a crew for the ship which he has inadvertently stolen, by way of being an accidental drunken stowaway. Abandoned by their unwitting Captain (Catarrh the Shipwright), Urethra, along with a mermaid named Emily, and the ship's navigator, Raymond the seagull, must find a way to return the clipper *Unexpected Goose* to Gluteus Maximus, Caliph of Bigredland, without being dismembered in the process.

The Accumulator-turned-Ambassador escapes from Khonland when Balance and Colon make their return journey to Hamfist, by hiding in one of the never-ending saddlebags carried by the Monastery's goat. He steals the *Unexpected Goose* from the Hamfist docks, and once at sea, is about to be captured by the Caliph's waiting longships; but he is rescued by Bearded Iris, and makes his escape once more.

The Caliph's men, fearing a ghost ship, abandon the clipper, and it is returned to Hamfist by Raymond and Emily.

Urethra, transformed from callow youth to decent young man by experience (and Emily's influence), abandons his dream of becoming a whole-of-life agent, and sets off with Emily and Raymond in the *Unexpected Goose*, in search of a long-lost treasure in the Southern Oceans – the same treasure which Catarrh had been seeking, when he stole the clipper to escape from the slavery of the Caliph.

Sub-plot in this episode is the story of Urethra's rich and spoiled girlfriend in the Old Country, Labia, her parents Fallopian and vas Deferens, her Uncle Glans and Auntie Aureola (not her real Auntie and Uncle, but Mummy and Daddy's very good friends), and her deflowering by the same Uncle Glans (along with her first introduction to the Hangover Goblin).

The Druids also endure a visit by Sister Agapanthus, and a number of the nuns from their companion order in the Old Country, who are continually attempting to make the Druids abandon their vows of celibacy.

Episode three, *Penguins*, sees us in the Old Country. Here, the former Accumulator and escaped Ambassador has revealed his name, and established himself as The Black Prepuce. He has infiltrated the Grand Lodge of the Old Country (headquartered in the capital city, Nom Cap), and is continuing his attempts to overthrow the Pzar by influencing the minds of the citizenry. Informed that the way to do this is to capture and control a society's sacred cows, the Black Prepuce kidnaps the cow belonging to the druids of Hamfist, and transports it to the Old Country. He reasons that because the Druids are a Sacred Order, their cow must be a sacred cow.

Glans and vas Deferens, big wheels in the financial and underwriting world in the Old Country, are completely under the Black Prepuce's spell.

Balance and Colon, unaware of the cow's disappearance, are adventuring again, journeying to the Old Country on a potato-smuggling mission. The new Pzar has banned the potato, on the grounds that he is becoming too fat from eating them, and a highly lucrative black market has

sprung up in the dark and winding back streets of Nom Cap. Accompanied by Hector, they rescue the cow (Pat), with the help of The Red Penguin – a.k.a. Sister Melissa, the young, highly gymnastic, and stunningly gorgeous rebel nun from the Daughters of the Horizontal Sacrament, the Druids' companion order in the Old Country.

Battling them are a number of Prepuce's henchpersons (chief amongst them Oesophagus the Thief), as well as the dark and mysterious Supreme Lizard of the Grand Lodge of the Old Country, who is reputed to have leased his soul to the Devil.

Episode four is titled ***Turkeys***. Parts of the story occur in the equivalent of the modern day in our Universe, and by now it is apparent to readers that Balance is not only immortal, but also a time traveler. His ongoing battle with the Dark Forces represented by the Black Prepuce has become the central theme in the continuing saga.

Prepuce, also able to travel through time (with the help of Bearded Iris), has kidnapped Ulrica Xanadu, lead singer of the band Sixtyninesixtynine. Balance sets out to rescue her, with the help of several members of the Enthusiasts Motorcycle Club (including Halitosis and Peristalsis, otherwise known as Hal and Perry), and the band's drummer (who, as a youth, was asked for his name so often by the Nom Cap constabulary, that he changed it by deed poll to Phukkov Piggs). The ArchDruid, immeasurably aged, has been thrown out of his body following an audit by Old Father Time, who declares it uninhabitable. His ghostly form takes up residence on an easy chair in Colon's workshop instead.

In Episode five, ***Pelicans***, parts of the story occur in space, and on the starships of the future. But Balance makes regular return trips to the familiar Hamfist which readers have come to know and love, and some of the loose ends and curious parallels created in previous episodes are beginning to be drawn together.

In ***Ducks***, the sixth and final episode of the Hamfist Saga, we journey first to the prehistoric past, and finally back to the Hamfist of the story's beginning. Here, Balance and the Druids fight the ultimate battle with their enemies, Bearded Iris and the Black Prepuce. Balance proves his service to the Lady, the Great Aearth Mother, and is rewarded with the mortality he has long craved.

Balance and the ArchDruid then take the final journey to the other side; but it is a time not only for endings, but also for new beginnings, as Colon and Lucy have begun the creation of the next generation.

Thus the cycle of life is completed along with the cycle of time, the outer adventures of the adventurers coincide with the completion of their own inner journeys, and with the triumph of good over evil, harmony is restored, by an aptly named unlikely hero; as Brother Humus remarks to the Lady, at almost The Very End: "Indeed, Ma'am; all things in Balance."



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CHICKENS SYNOPSIS CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

One:

Colon meets the Deacon, the Bishop, and some invisible chickens, and reluctantly accepts the position of odd-job man at the Monastery.

Two:

Introducing the Accumulator Fiscal, and a brief description of Hamfist and its history, along with an outline of the story so far.

Three:

We meet Balance, the Cook, several Druids, some animals, and an impressive quantity of beer, and have a guided tour of the Monastery. Balance and Colon hit it off very well. Bernice the Dragon demonstrates her cataclysmic flatulence.

Four:

Balance steals a pass key and takes Colon out on the town, fitting him with a magic disguise first. The Accumulator Fiscal begins hatching his plans to overthrow the Druids. Sphinxer and Mucous run foul of a group of Khonish riverboatmen, and Colon earns himself a visit from the Hangover Goblin. Lucy is angry with Colon.

Five:

Colon gets to work, visits Fat Sunbeam's Hardware Emporium, helps Balance deliver beer to the Khons, and buys a present for Lucy.

Six:

Balance shows Colon a hidden chamber and magic pool deep beneath the Monastery. The chamber is a gateway to other places; but don't drink the water. Lucy takes a shine to Pancreas, who is Colon's alter ego when he is wearing his magic disguise. The Accumulator Fiscal disguises Spleen as a woman in an attempt to infiltrate the Monastery. Colon reveals himself to Lucy, gives her her present, and they make up.

Seven:

Spleen penetrates the Monastery and receives a dose of unpleasant medicine. Vermillion makes his appearance. The Accumulator Fiscal seeks recruits for his rival magical order. Colon has a lesson in brewing beer. We learn the history of the War of the Dragons, the War of the Pigs, and the friendship between the people of Hamfist and the Khons.

Eight:

Colon builds a drain-unblocker. The Accumulator enlists the help of Bearded Iris. Vermillion heads out in search of female company.

Nine:

Bearded Iris takes sexual advantage of the members of the Accumulator's order. Brother Humus takes Colon astral traveling. Iris summons a troll from the eighth dimension. Appendix meets an unpleasant and messy end.

Ten:

Earl (the troll) helps the Accumulator to kidnap Brother Equidae, the mad Druid. Earl eats some curious mushrooms, and falls for Iris. Balance and Colon take part in a ritual with the Druids, summoning the Lady. Colon is given his mission.

Eleven:

Equidae causes mayhem when the Accumulator lets him perform magic. Earl and Iris run off to the eighth dimension. When the effects of the mushrooms wear off, Earl abandons her there. Bernice is feeling clucky. Colon's drain unblocker battles a mysterious blockage. The Accumulator's men take Lucy prisoner. Balance, Colon, and Vermillion rescue her with a flying carpet.

Twelve:

Spleen, concerned at his master's sanity, has secretly contacted the Pzar, who arrives for a surprise visit. The Accumulator plans to overthrow him. Balance, Colon and Vermillion rescue Brother Equidae. The Pzar sentences the Accumulator to become Ambassador to Khonland, and appoints Spleen as Acting Accumulator.

Thirteen:

Equidae regains his mind, and the Druids learn a valuable lesson. Iris is trapped in the eighth dimension. Her familiar, Stewart the Stoat, meets a sticky end. Tremble is finally released from the Monastery's drains. Colon discovers the inner meaning to his mission, and Lucy moves into the Monastery.

Epilogue:

Bernice finds love at last; and Hector gets the Art Deco stable he has always wanted.

“We used it to paint the ceilings a few centuries ago, because it was easier to move around than scaffolding,” said the Deacon. “It must have been put back in the attic after that.”

“Does it still work, then?” asked Brother Saccharomyces.

“It rose up an’ stuck itself to the inside of the roof when I took the chaise longe off it, so I s’pose so,” replied Balance. “I dunno where the book of commands is, though.”

“Ooh, I expect we can make it operate after a fashion,” said brother Mimulus. “One flying carpet must be very much like another.”

“Yes, I’m afraid so,” said the Deacon. “They’re all temperamental sods.”

“Well I must say I’m looking forward to this,” lied Colon. “A temperamental flying carpet with no instruction book, and a dangerous mission to rescue a nutcase Druid from the clutches of a madman tax collector, all in the name of some great reason wot I’m not going to find out until I’m dead.”

“It’s rather exciting, don’t you think?” said Brother Mimulus. “You could write a book about it, when you get back.”

“I’m not literarily inclined,” said the oddjob man sourly. “Anyway, I think somebody already has.”

About The Author

Richard Prosser was born in New Zealand in 1967. After suffering the usual indignities of being held upside down, smacked on the bum, raised, and educated, he set off to see the world, and met lots of interesting people in strange places, as well as quite a few strange people in interesting places.

He has worked as (amongst other things) a lab technician, barman, salesman, pub manager, salesman, construction worker, engineer, salesman, orchard worker, storeman, truck driver, salesman, viticulturalist, winemaker, journalist, and salesman, in between teaching Reiki, going to Parliament for a couple of terms, and writing countless outraged Letters to Editors.

Richard lives in Northamptonshire in England, with his wife Elaine, and their very expensive globe-trotting cat, Juliette.

He describes writing books as the most fun you can have with your pants on, unless of course nobody is watching.