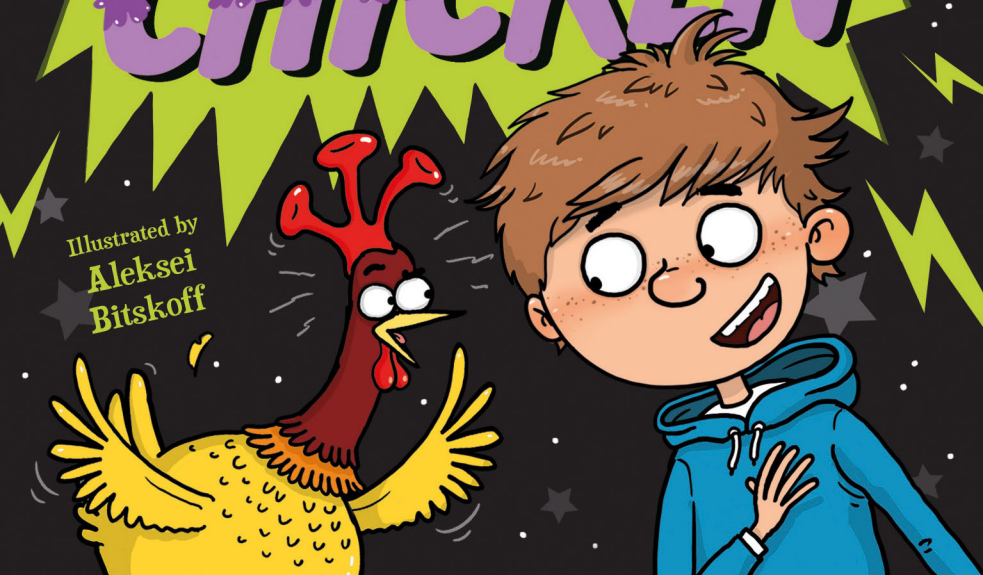
JENNY PEARSON

Bertie and the ALIEN CHICKEN

Illustrated by Aleksei Bitskoff



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Barrington Stoke

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CHAPTER 1

What do you find on a farm?

Ask anyone what they would find on a farm, and they would probably say something like, "Cows, pigs, sheep."

Not, "An alien chicken with a bit of an attitude problem."

But that's exactly what I found when I went to stay at Long Bottom Farm with my Uncle Brian this summer.

To be honest, I was not thrilled about the idea of staying with my uncle. I'd been for a

few day visits over the years, but I'd never stayed over. Farms aren't really my thing. I might have been more pumped about my visit if I'd known about the adventure I'd have with Nugget, the alien chicken, saving the world. But as it was, I didn't. So I was very *not* pumped.

We were in the car on the way to the farm when I presented Mum with a list of reasons why I should go with her on her work trip to America instead.

"Mother," I said, in my most businessy voice, "I would like to discuss this small matter of me going to stay with Uncle Brian. This is NOT going to be an awesome summer holiday!"

"You're going," Mum said. "Discussion over."

I wasn't going to be beaten that fast. "I shall start with point one," I went on. "The place stinks!"

"It's a farm – it's a good smell," Mum said.

"A good smell?" I said. "Are you kidding? It smells so bad that you have to breathe using your mouth. Even then, I'm sure the smell seeps into your eyeballs and earholes."

"Don't be over-dramatic," Mum told me.

"On to point two," I added. "The farm is in the countryside."

"Yes, Bertie," Mum said, giving a big sigh. "That's where they tend to be."



"The countryside is not exactly the entertainment centre of the UK," I pointed out. "There's no skate park, no arcade, no shopping centre and none of my mates are in the countryside! I'll be lonely."

I said *lonely* very sadly in the hope that Mum might feel a bit sorry for me.

But nope.

"It will do you good," Mum said. "Besides, you'll have lots of animals to spend time with."

"You want me to make friends with the livestock?"

"Why not?" Mum asked.

"Why not? *Why not?*" I replied.

"You're going to have a fantastic time."

"Oh yeah, me and the cows will be best buddies. Point three!" I continued. "Uncle Brian's a bit … weird."

Mum tilted her head. "I wouldn't say weird," she said.

"Mum, he drank milk that he had just squeezed from a cow's udder into a bucket last time I was there!" I shuddered. "Cow. Udder. Squeeze-squeeze. Bucket. Mouth. Gone! Just like that!"

"That's where milk comes from, Bertie," Mum said, like it was perfectly normal to use a cow like a drinking fountain.

"Do you think all the gas from the animal farts has messed up his brain?" I asked.

"Don't be ridiculous," Mum snapped. "Look, your uncle Brian doesn't have kids of his own, and he's delighted to have you to stay. I'm sure he'll enjoy the company. Now, is that it?"

"No, that's not it!" I replied. "I have another point. Number four – the place smells soooo bad."

"You already said that."

"Yeah, but it's so bad, I think it needs to be mentioned twice."

"You'll get used to it."

"And I definitely can't go to Dad's?" I said quietly.

Mum's face softened. "Oh, sweetheart, you know Dad would have you to visit if he could."

"Why can't he?" I asked. "A new baby can't need that much looking after."

My dad had just had a baby with his girlfriend, Nancy. I was trying to be happy for them. But I wasn't. Not really. Dad had already left me. Now he'd replaced me too.

"You can visit him soon, I promise," Mum said. "You're going to have the best time with Uncle Brian, pumpkin."

"I'm not a pumpkin, and I'm not going to have the best time," I said, and slunk down in my seat. "I'm going to be soooo bored."

But it turned out I was completely wrong about the being bored thing.

Hanging around with an alien chicken called Nugget was not boring in the slightest.