



Clean  
In  
Your Own  
SKIN



Year 10,11

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#### **Parameters:**

**Primary character 1:** Plastic Surgeon

**Primary character 2:** Robot Builder

**Non-human character:** Chicken

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# You're not a duck

## Chapter 1

*'You're not a duck!'* Those words kept ringing through my head. I've heard them from every member in the community, but they just don't understand. It's like they don't want me to dream, to become who I really want to be.

The ducks always seem to love each other. They always care and look out for each other, but here it's different, you look after yourself.

I recall the big fight. The memories of the other chickens, screaming and attacking me wouldn't leave my mind. This is not how a chicken **community**, how a family, should behave towards their loved ones, towards me. It was in that moment that I couldn't take it anymore, I wouldn't put up with being told to be something other than what I dream of being. I got myself together, feeling proud and confident as I walked through the community of chickens. I approached the roosters, the head of the group, with my head held high, a different feeling then I had ever felt before.

"Have you finally come to your senses?" Yelled the head rooster.

"Yes I have," I answered confidently.

"Then this conversation is over," the head rooster demanded.

"Wait!" I quickly replied, grabbing the attention of everyone around.

I took a deep breath in and proudly said, "I've had enough, I can't take it anymore, I'm sick of being told I can't dream, to be inspired. I'm sick of no-one respecting me for who I am and making me feel like a disappointment, so I have decided I'm leaving, I'm off to find a new family, one who can inspire me, care for me, and show me love."

The other chickens had shocks on their face, some of them laughing, and some of them showing no interest. This didn't affect me as I proudly nodded, reassuring myself of my task ahead. I turned my back towards the community, towards my family, and walked away. As I walk, freedom fills my little body. This feeling was so amazing that I started to skip and sing, unaware of what adventures I would encounter. I didn't care where I was going as I **skipped** along, nothing could take the feeling of joy away from me.

I was leaving to follow my dream, to be who I truly wanted to be.

I walked for ages before I saw something other than the tall gum trees in the distance. It was new, different and I liked that. As tired as I was, I hurried towards this new place and was delighted to find a lush green garden. This garden was full of strange new items I had never come across before. There were these long green sticks with red or yellow ball like objects on the end, there were round yellow balls in the ground surrounded by dirt, but this one particular object caught my eye. This orange object was not in the shape of a ball, but in the shape of something much longer with a green tuff on the end. I move closer to the object, curious of what it is, my beak almost grabbing the green tuff when a rumble runs through my body and a loud booming noise rings in my ears.



## Some Garden Sense

### Chapter 2

Living in the middle of nowhere can have some interestin' effects on a person's mental state, especially if ya don't have no one to keep ya company. Hence, I moved in with this moron. His name's old mate Jimmy. At first, he seemed alright but lately he's been gettin' on my nerves.

"I'm just so sick of you" I screeched at my demented house mate.

"Well then just leave ya dumb skamp" he replied in a dopy voice.

As I stormed out the rusty old swingin', door into the stinkin' hot Aussie outback, I headed to the garden, my **magic** garden. The only place I could breathe and feel like myself. Looking around at the greenery, I'm astounded. Who would have believed that a garden of this quality and magnitude would even exist in the outback? Carrots and potatoes, roses and daffodils, all sprouting from the dry sand that realistically should be barren ground.

Taking a few deep breaths, I began to see sense. Old mate Jimmy's mullet isn't so bad. Nor are his experiments if you look past the fact that he almost burnt down my robot lab. I need food. Old mate Jimmy and I take turns cooking tea, tonight it's my turn. Turning to the garden I crouch down to dig out some carrots. It's peaceful out here.

"What is that orange stick? And why does it have green hair?" a high voice squeaks. It startles me as it's abrupt in the quiet garden. I turn to see this small rooster. He's only 30cm tall in stature and oh so cute! Wait, why is this chicken talking?! And would he make a good meal?

Just as I was thinking, the little pecker interrupted my chain of thought.

"Oi, do you think you could help me out?"

"Umm, what? You've got to explain, first tell me who you are, and what you're doing in my garden?" I felt slightly loopy for talking to what looked like a little rooster, but like what else was I supposed to do?

"Well, my name is Bazza and I identify as a duck, but my chicken **community** refuses to accept that fact, so I left. Just like that, I packed up my feathers and left. As you may have gathered by my question prior, I'm very confused, would you mind telling me, what are these long orange things with green hair, do they talk too??"

After his little introduction and bizarre question, I started contemplating my own sanity. Was this a dream? Had I completely lost it? I looked up to my Kookaburra, Davo for some help, but he just stared at me as though I was the only one who'd lost it. Davo stares and **sings** a quiet tune that only adds a soundtrack to this insanity. This is too much! I turn and walk to the house, unsure of what was happening.



## Old Mate Jimmy

### Chapter 3

I sighed as I slowly sat down in my chair. I ran a hand through my brown hair. *Mad*. That's what everyone thought of me. Just a weird, mad, ugly man who lived in the middle of nowhere. As I sat in silence, the scent of the chemicals in the laboratory wafted through the air. I cradled my face in my hands, it felt like I hadn't slept in a week. As my orange eyes looked aimlessly around the dusty room, my mind wandered back to a few years ago, to the day my eye colour changed.

"Those stupid people, saying I can't use anaesthesia." I muttered to myself. "I was just trying to make some of my own. But I forgot about the glass of chemicals I had mixed the week prior. I thought it was orange juice. Pretty quick I realised it was the chemicals and was sick in bed for the next few days. When I finally got better, I looked in the mirror to find I was staring at orange eyes." People always say I talk to myself. As a matter of fact, I don't talk to myself, I talk to someone, but it's just that someone isn't always there.

I groaned and yawned. I got up and walked into the house where Shazza was making dinner. I often wonder if I made the right decision of letting her live with me. She said she wanted to use my laboratory for her robot making. She's not the easiest person to get along with. Always angry, shoutin' and yellin' at me. It seems like she's angry at whatever I do, whether I do something, or not.



# The Scrunched Faces

## Chapter 4

My little legs couldn't keep up with the giant! I just wanted to start again and make a friend, but it seemed like she was uninterested, did I scare her? I tried to follow, but she disappeared into this strange box thing that towered above me and blocked my way. Now I was all alone again. I was starting to think that maybe no one wanted to be my friend. Maybe I just wasn't good enough? Feeling sorry for myself, I slowly started to waddle away when the noise of yelling voices grabbed my attention. I moved closer to this huge box layered in wood and metal and looked through a glass widow. I saw not one but two giants, their huge hands pointing at each other as the noises coming from their mouth echo in my ears. I was very familiar with the noise of yelling as its all I ever herd from my so called 'family and friends'. With this in mind, I decided to listen closer to the giant's arguments as if I knew what it was about, I might be able to help them and then we can all be friends. This idea made happiness fill my body, I jumped around at the fact that I, the chicken who wants to be a duck, was so close to having friends. Calming myself down, I listened closer to what the giants were arguing about.

"There was a rooster!" The female giant yelled. Was she talking about me? Did I make her angry? "Well of course there was a rooster! We need to eat something don't we?!" The male giant scares me. His voice booms and his face twists in a scrunched way.

"The rooster talked! I bet if you went outside right now, he'd still be there!" They weren't going to come out here and yell, were they? I don't think I'd like that.

"I don't want to go outside Shazza. I swear your robot things keep moving! Just the other day I sat my scalpels on the desk, and I came back to one of them holding it!" The male giant was getting less angry now, he almost seemed afraid.

"They don't take things! They don't even move for goodness sake. You're just trying to change the subject from the talking rooster!" They're talking about me again!

"Shazza you're a kangaroo short in the top paddock! A brick short of a load! I'm beginning to think you're not the sharpest tool in the shed."

"Don't insult me ya drongo!" The female giants voice is starting to get very shrill. Just like how a young rooster sounds when he's learning to crow. Maybe if I peck at the side of the box they're in they will notice me and stop being scrunchy faced. I peck at the box and the yelling just continues. Suddenly it stops and booming footsteps come closer.

## Bazza

### Chapter 5

The door opens and I stand, not knowing if I should be scared or not. The male giant nearly stands on me as he stomps outside. He looks around for a bit, seems confused, and then turns to go back inside. Before he does, my mind goes overtime and I start clucking, hoping to attract attention. Even though I know inside I'm a duck, my natural tendencies cause me to make chicken noises. Anyway, it works, and he looks down at me.

"Hi," I say as he blinks a few times, "My name is Bazza and my biggest dream is to become a duck, because of this my chicken family has disowned me and doesn't want to know anything about me. I just want to make friends! Who are you and why were you and the other giant lady fighting? I had a little talk to her back in that garden over there and then, all of a sudden, she just up and left me... I don't really know what I did wrong?"

The giant's face was full of disbelief as he would not stop staring at me. I wondered if I had upset him, hurt him in anyway. That, however, was the last thing I wanted to do, all I wanted was to be friends with the giants, but this option was slowly fading. With a determined mind, I attempted to speak again, but the male giant opened his mouth.

"Blimey, this chicken actually does talk!" he said with a smile forming on his disfigured face.

"See, I told you but you never listen," mumbled the female giant as she approaches the left side of the male giant, her arms crossed against her chest.

"Wait a sec, did you say you wanted to be a duck?" asked the male giant as the smile grew bigger and bigger. As his smile grew, I knew what was to follow, laughter and lots of it. It started again, the laughs of all the other chickens wouldn't stop replaying in my mind. I held my head down and braced myself for all the laughter that was about to come.

"That's brilliant!" yelled the male giant with excitement in his voice.

This instantly caught my attention, as I had never received this reaction before. I held my little head up high, paying more attention to what my new friend was saying.

"Can you help me?" I questioned as hope filled my voice.

"Can 'I' help you! Of course I can! It's what I do," replied the male giant while the female giant rolls her eyes and walks away.

This made all my feathers stand up on end, for once in my life, someone was willing to help me! I was so happy I almost cried. This was the happiest day of my life, but I wondered how on earth my new friend, the giant, would help a chicken like me turn into a duck.

"So, you mean, you can help me, and you want to help me? But why?" I questioned in wonder.

"Well, let me tell ya mate" the male giant explained. "My name's Jimmy, people call me old mate Jimmy, but you can just call me Jimmy."

Jimmy, I liked the sound of that name, had I finally made a friend? I was so excited but I kept my small body under control as I listened further.

"I'm a plastic surgeon, that means I help people become who they want to be by changing their features and making them look more attractive, I do this because it's very important for people to feel comfortable in their own body and it makes me happy when I help people." Jimmy explained.

"Oh Jimmy, that's perfect! Do you think you could help me become a duck?" I asked, all my feathers standing on end.

"Why certainly mate, come with me to the lab and I'll show you what I can do." Jimmy replied with excitement.

I waddled alongside my new friend Jimmy into this building he called a lab. He started to show me all the strange items he had in his lab and told me all how they would help me become a duck. I was so fascinated by everything Jimmy was saying, until the whole lab became dark and Jimmy stopped

explaining. I look out the window and a great big, grey storm cloud was hovering right above us. I tried to tell myself it was just an ordinary storm cloud, but the fact that the female giant rushed through the door with a look of worry on her face instantly assured me that this was bigger than I thought.

## Shazza's Robot

### Chapter 6

I begin thinking about my past. How do I tell them? I don't want to tell them anything about me. What right do they have to know? Bazza looks at me and confusion crosses his little face, is it obvious that something's wrong? Jimmy looks at me like I've lost my mind. We all sit in the lab, surrounded by scrap metal and robot parts. The robots in the corner almost seem to be watching us, their **canvas** skin stretching tautly over their metal limbs.

"Alright Shazza, we're sitting here, and you look like you've seen a ghost. What's the matter?"

Jimmy says with a hint of concern. Now is the time to tell them.

"I was only young. Me mum and dad, and me aunt and uncle were all outside just after Christmas. It had been raining for days but that's to be expected for the wet season. The wind was picking up and trees were beginning to lose branches. Mum rushed me inside and down into the cellar where it was safe. She told me she was gonna go back and get dad, Uncle Damo and Aunty Sheila," I pause for a second, breathing slowly and steadily.

Bazza looks at me, his innocent face distraught. But it's Jimmy that I'm worried about. His normally pale face has turned a sickly shade of grey and his eyes are tight.

"That was the last time I saw them. The wind howled for hours and I was waiting for them to come back, but they never did. After what felt like days, I could hear a voice. I opened the cellar door and a police officer was walking around the ruins of my home. He told me that a cyclone had hit, and that mum, dad, Uncle Damo and Aunty Sheila were gone. I had no family left and he tried to take me away. So, I ran. I ended up in the bush with a nice aboriginal family and they took care of me until I left. That's when I met Jimmy and I've been here ever since. The pain I felt losing my family is something I wouldn't want anyone to go through. You never get passed that you know?" I look over at Jimmy and silent tears pour down his face.

"Whatever is the matter?!" Bazza asks, confusion dripping from his voice. Jimmy looks heartbroken and I can't understand why.

"My mums name was Sheila. My dad's name was Damo. I haven't seen them since I was 14," he says, his voice is strangled, and his eyes are flooded with tears. I'm shocked and everything is slowly coming together.

"You're my...cousin?" I ask past the lump in my throat.

"It looks like it," Jimmy says.

"I began building robots in the hopes that people would become attached to that rather than other people, therefore preventing the inevitable heartbreak when people die," I finish speaking and everyone's quiet. I knew I shouldn't have told them.

"Can these robots do anything?" Bazza asks in his high-pitched voice.

"Can they do anything? Of course they can! Let me show you!" I gesture for them to head outside and I grab a robot.

Outside, the wind is blowing through the trees and the clouds have all turned dark and ominous. I set the robot down in front of everyone and turned it on. Vacuums started and the robot passed backwards and forward sucking up trees and dirt.

"Isn't it a beaut?" I exclaim.

"Uh Shazza," Jimmy begins. "Isn't that just a vacuum cleaner in the shape of a robot?"

"No, it's better! It is a wind and cyclone sucker upper!" I answer with enthusiasm. I've never shown anyone my robots before. Suddenly, the wind picks up and a torrential rain pours from the sky.

"I think you should go inside!" I say to them. Poor Bazza is looking like a drowned rat, and considering he's a chicken, that's not a good look.

## Less Than 24 Hours

### Chapter 7

At this point I was getting really excited! Just think, in less than 24 hours I would be a duck! My dream come true, what more could I want? Old mate Jimmy and I started talking about how tomorrow would pan out, the possible complications, what exactly he was going to do...

"To be completely honest mate, I don't think there's much that could go all that wrong, I mean yea, I *am* a self-taught plastic surgeon, but I've read the manual and know exactly what to do!" Jimmy stated in such assurance that there was no possible way anyone, ever, could doubt him!

"Old boy, I trust you, I am putting my full confidence in you mate, I know you wouldn't let me down!" as I said that, I realised how gullible I was being. I hardly knew this man, but he seemed so friendly. How couldn't I?

"I must just point out, mate, I've never done this procedure before, I've never done any procedures before... I'm just so honoured that you'd let me do this, I hope you understand my thankfulness," Jimmy says, and after hearing this, I feel a little uneasy. But, as I said before, this is my dream that's going to become a reality. I need to just be brave! I was a little nervous as I heard some of the other things that could go wrong, but Jimmy seemed to keep me mostly optimistic.

We continued talking, about tomorrows excitement, when Jimmy, out of the blue, commented on how windy it had become. He said that we should probably start a fire as it was probably going to be a cold night. He went outside to fetch some kindling as I looked around at how dark it had become so quickly.

After Jimmy came inside from battling the wind, he realised this is no ordinary storm and I agree. With this Shazza runs inside, hair standing straight on end from the fierce wind. "Run!" She screams above the howling wind.

"Lab, quick!" We all jump on our feet and make a mad dash in the lab's direction.

## To the Point of No Return

### Chapter 8

Jimmy hurried over and picked me up. I didn't like it, but he ignored me, and they both started running towards the laboratory.

"Quick!" Shazza shouted as we reached the door. "Get the door open!"

Jimmy put me on the ground and the wind almost knocked me over as he tried to open the door.

Fear filled me as I saw the dark clouds ever drawing nearer.

"I can't get the door open against the wind!" Jimmy shouted.

Shazza helped him, and together, they both managed to open the door. We all hurry inside, making sure we securely lock it.

Shazza ran over to the other end where a few of her robots stood, the thick layer of dust showed on most of them as they hadn't been touched in a long time. She moved them out from against the wall and fixed a few things on them before she turned to a computer, turned it on and pressed a few buttons.

"What are you doing?" Jimmy asked.

"I've got a plan," she said determinedly. "I've been waiting for this, and I'm prepared."

"Will it work?"

"It has to. We have no choice," she replied.

I watched for a few minutes in silence, the only noise was the deafening wind and rain from outside.

"Help me get these outside," she said as she started moving the heavy machinery. Jimmy quickly helped her, and with much effort, they got them outside. I followed behind them and walked out the doors where the wind was getting stronger.

"How are these supposed to help?" Jimmy asked.

The wind was howling, and the rain flew torrentially from the sky. I was scared, if I get blown into a puddle I could drown! I try to keep my emotions under control but it's getting scary now. Shazza sets up her robot and Jimmy mutters something about the robot being an overgrown vacuum cleaner. What's a vacuum cleaner and how does it become overgrown? The robot gets turned on and it seems to be working for a second... Then the wind picks up and the robot is blown away into the distance.

"Oh no!" Shazza cries. "My robot is gone and what hope is there left for us now!"

Jimmy looks panicked and his eyes dart around looking for a safe haven. Shazza had dropped to her knees and shock is written all over her face.

"I'm going up the tree!" Jimmy yells above the wind. Shazza seems not to hear him because she picks me up, much to my own disgust, and shoves me through the door and shuts it behind me. I run to the window and look out. She's running towards Jimmy, who is attempting to climb the tree. They seem to be yelling at each other, but I can't hear what they're saying over the wind and rain. Shazza looks outraged and she reaches up to caress Jimmy's face, there seems to be a lot of force behind that caress and it looks like it hurts. Jimmy clutches at his face and finally follows Shazza inside.

Once they're inside they are absolutely saturated. Shazza looks at Jimmy and Jimmy looks at me.

"I think we just need to wait it out and hope for the best." Shazza says. Jimmy agrees and we sit there quietly. My eyes begin to feel tired and a wave of exhaustion hits me. It's been a long day.

## Three's a family, not a crowd

### Chapter 9

I was in the middle of my friend Jimmy and his friend Shazza. For once in my life, I felt safe because I knew I was with my friends, my family. Yes, when I first met Shazza she wasn't the type of person you would instantly warm up to, but once she opened up and I learnt about her past, almost anyone would instantly feel sorry and warm up to her, and that's exactly what I did. Then there is my old friend, Jimmy, who when I first met, instantly tried to help me to fulfil my dream and become a duck. The warmth of their giant like bodies gently pressing against mine makes me think of how lucky I am to be in presence of my friends. While my chicken community are probably flying around everywhere in the massive storm, I'm safe and sound and it was about time. After what seemed like forever, the wind was starting to lessen, and everything went silent.

"Is it over?" asked Jimmy and I in sync.

"I think so, just wait here and I'll go check," Shazza said nervously.

Before Shazza could move, Jimmy grabs Shazza and pulls her back.

"Shazza wait, we are in this together ok, we will all go and check if its safe alright," Jimmy said in a gentle tone. This formed a small smile on Shazza's face, and tears started to fill her eyes.

We all got up and grabbed each other's hands, together we felt strong, because we were a family. As we opened the door, I look outside and surrounding us was destruction. Almost everything but the magic garden was ruined, Shazza's robots were all over the place, Jimmy's lab was ruined and scattered everywhere. I looked up at their heart broken faces with disbelief.

"Oh guys, I'm so sorry," I apologised as if it was my fault. "At least we are all safe and, together right?"

Jimmy looks at me and starts to smile.

"It's all good mate, I'm just sorry I don't have all my equipment to make you a duck," Jimmy said in disappointment.

"Well, I've actually decided I don't want to be a duck anymore, in fact I'm more than happy being a chicken. I mean, you guys have all accepted me for who I am, and that's a chicken." I proudly replied.

"A good chicken you mean," Jimmy said as he winks at me.

"A good one indeed," adds Shazza as she gently nudges me.

### **Blurb**

When a chicken's wishes collide with the life of a self-taught plastic surgeon, and a reserved robot builder you may begin to wonder what they could possibly do for each other. Read all about how Bazza, Shazza and old mate Jimmy become a true family.

Suggested age: 14-16