

'Owle, Chicken, Bear, Sparrow and Stanley  
in the Rodeo.'

by  
Ian Hutton

Illustrations by P. Faminow

Smashwords Edition

Copyright © 2013, Ian Hutton  
All Rights Reserved.  
ISBN 978-0-9868118-1-4

Smashwords Licensing Notes:

This is a Non-DRM eBook.  
If you wish to share it, please show your  
family and friends where to buy their own copies  
because I share my earnings with my Food Bank.  
Or, even better, send them as gifts.  
Thank you for contributing.  
Ian Hutton

This is a story to read to a friend.

Owle, Chicken, Bear, Sparrow and Stanley.

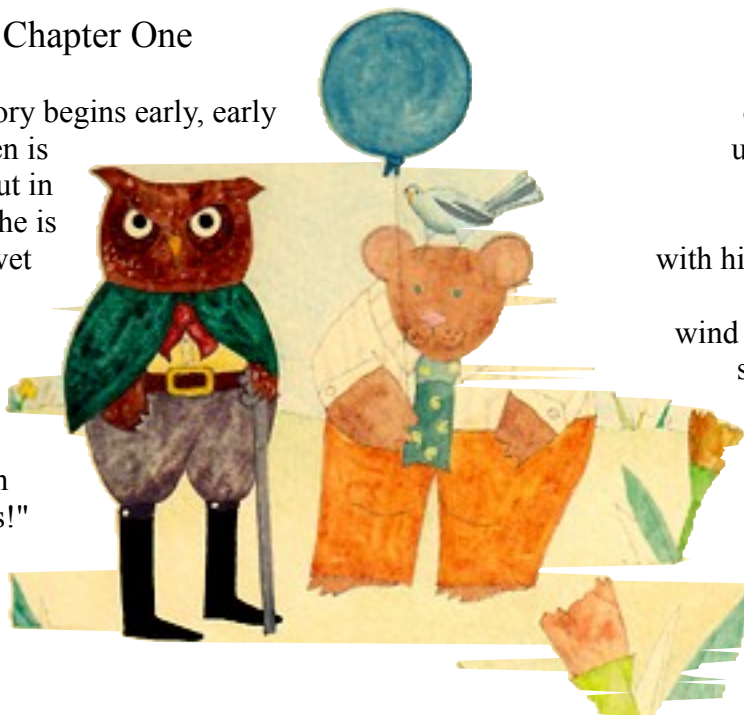
"Excuse me Ian, but I hope it's not about Stanley  
because he's not here yet."

"Oh, I see. Let's save him a chair."

Chapter One

The story begins early, early  
Chicken is  
early out in  
where he is  
and wet

The  
wild,  
of an  
"Yes!"



one morning.  
up and out his door,  
the morning air  
fresh in the wind  
with his feet in the morning dew.

wind is ripping through the trees,  
shaking the limbs and scattering  
leaves;  
in anticipation  
extra-ordinary day.  
shouts Chicken,

"this is a very not ordinary day!"

And it is so because Chicken  
has worked all week long,  
carrying pails of nails  
and wooden rails  
and lanterns through the night.

Through the shadows he crept,  
with ladders dragging  
and buckets banging  
and he did not cry for help.

There were secrets in his eyes  
but not a word, for anyone.

His friends had heard  
his actions in the night.  
They had heard his hammer  
tilting nails into wood  
and more than that,  
but none came close  
nor even guessed,  
what he was at.

And finally, today is the day  
of the Surprise Event  
and he must deliver the Invitations  
to his friends.

He marches quickly around the field.  
He hops vigorously, up and down;  
puffing while bending  
and un-puffing himself again.

"I must be ready for the very  
precarious ride through the  
Ring Round Woods to Owle's house."

The sun bursts its heat hot on his head  
as he hops smartly about, ordering his feet:  
"Left. Right. Left. Right. You there, keep in step!"  
commands Chicken, as he quick-marches them out  
to where the last of night, had not yet left,  
and there, he stops.

A bird above him is pleasantly humming:  
"My, oh my, what a bird-fectly fine day."

"Hmmp!" spits Chicken, looking Day  
straight in the eye.  
"It's never day in the Ring Round Woods.  
It's blacker than a night should be.  
And it's filled with creatures of wicked hearts  
and today, they wait for me."

Chicken's feet begin to back up,  
but he stops them with a shout:  
"Stop! Don't worry.  
They won't be wise, whatever they be,  
if they try to interrupt our speed.  
They certainly shouldn't, they'd better not,  
or else, instead of catching,  
they'll be caught!"



**KICK!**  
A blade of grass, topples to the ground  
as he marches to his horse (bicycle)  
which is tethered near his door.

He checks the ground for tracks  
and for prints upon his mount,  
but no, there are none, nothing touched.

Sometimes, when riding,  
Chicken wears a clown suit

so his friends won't think  
he's a serious cyclist.

But today, he is circling round  
himself, to be certain,  
that he is not being followed.

He tucks the Invitations  
into the secret slot  
in the left earflap of his cap,  
and pulls the straps, just to,  
under his chin.

He snaps his goggles into place,  
takes a hopping good leap onto  
his horse, and saddles away  
across the meadow.

Waves of yellow and tufted green,  
spill like salt from his sides,  
as he rides smoothly,  
swiftly, in the morning light.

"What was that?"  
(It was a flash of light.)

"There's another!" cries Chicken.  
"Maybe it's lightning, or maybe,  
it's a secretly coded message.  
Yes, that's it, that's it!  
They're trying to track me!"

Chicken rips his bike from the path  
and throws himself ruthlessly, to the ground.  
The bumps cause lumps in his throat  
but he does not draw a breath.

Silence.  
Chicken lies in wait, and waits.  
But nothing is moving except the  
shadows of trees around him.  
He challenges one of them to box  
(he often does to keep in shape)  
but they, wisely, say nothing.

Chicken dusts himself while rising.

His laughing buttons clean themselves  
as he remounts and rides on down,  
down to the edge of the Ring Round Woods.

The heat from the meadow turns cold  
on his skin as he begins to descend  
the crooked trail  
that leads him in  
to the cold, pale, stale, air  
which sucks the breath  
from his throat.

"They say, the Moon, when it goes out,  
it is lost in here,"  
Shivers Chicken, in the darkness.

He pedals faster, pushing deeper  
into the twisted limbs  
of the black-eyed trees,  
into their thorny spines,  
which are scratching at his knees.

He almost screams  
as spidery branches  
web close to his face.  
And voices, so many voices,  
are calling out his name:  
"Chicken...Chicken...come here Chicken!"

His heart is pounding inside him  
as the voices, crawling round him,  
remind him, they surround him,  
in the Ring Round Woods.

He bursts his speed forward,  
leaning from his seat,  
watching for rocks and logs  
and jams upon the road.

Over the Crossingstream Bridge he roars,  
knowing that beneath him are spies,  
struggling to rip out boards  
from beneath his tires.

Past the last, clutching tree he shoots,  
into open air, into sunshine he floats,

with not a moment spare.

"Oh I said they couldn't.  
They cannot see,  
the motions I make,  
at blinding speed!"  
spouts Chicken,  
embracing himself.

Owle's meadow calms him  
in its ease of colours.  
His horse settles into rhythm,  
beneath his feet.  
A laze of leaves, swirls in his wheels,  
as he rears to a stop, at Owle's door.

He removes Owle's Invitation  
from his cap  
and lays it beneath  
a stone on Owle's mat.

He snaps a salute and resumes his ride  
to the homes of Bear and Sparrow.

Smoke has not yet lifted from Owle's fire.



## Chapter Two

Something familiar slips past Owle's beak  
and he reaches for it, which wakes him.

The sun is streaming through his window  
leaving sky, to touch his floor.

The bright abruptness of the light, leaves  
the last settling shake of sleep to depart,  
and Owle lifts his head to the morning, awake.

He attaches his night-coat, now day-coat  
and shuffles in his slippers to the door;  
opening it wide, for his first deep breath  
of morning air.

"Ouch," says his toe, as it stubs a stone.  
Owle looks down and sees Chicken's scratch.  
He picks it up, and begins to read:

TO: Owle Hoo, Esq.  
( his name had been shortened from Hoot  
which he didn't often do. )

Dear Owle,  
The pleasure of your company  
is requested this day in West Meadow  
for the First Ever Tex's Rodeo!

There will be occasional horses and Indians  
and balloons as big as ocean oysters.  
And songs to sing,  
surprises to ride,  
and Featuring:  
'The Blood Living Star of the West',  
Cowboy Chicken!

Come and see his big hat.

And it was signed:  
Your friend, Chicken

PS: The Map is on the Back.

Owle turns to the map and finds  
all kinds of lines, and splots of ink.  
Hither and skither, they seem to say:  
"You'll all end up in the lake!"

Though the map was dense and confusing,

with ink-spots black and blueing,  
Owle could see some choices,  
and he began to view them.

One way wove down  
through the thicket trees  
over by Falling Bank.  
Another twisted toward the sun  
and left the page completely!

"Hmm...this isn't a map of directions.  
It's a map of urges. It gives me urges to begin,"  
laughs Owle.

"Oh, I won't be long, not long,"  
says Owle,  
standing at the sink side,  
beaking feathers back,  
breaking oil from his skin,  
until each feather shone in the firelight.

"Oh no, I won't be long," says Owle,  
tapping his toes to the crackle  
and hissle of the firetalk.

He takes out his pressed clothes,  
his silver pocket-watch and cane,  
and adds a small medallion, given him,  
for honour under rain.

He shakes the folds from his coat  
and begins to dress, with an  
eye on himself in the mirror  
and his voice on this song:

"Oh the tranquil mountains,  
Never show you what's beyond.  
You must go there,  
And make the climb yourself."





Owle's plates are clean upon the washboard,  
his hearth now tightly kept.  
He is done with preparations,  
when, ka-rash, his door is hit.

In it smashes, coat-rack against the wall,  
and tumult is in Owle, until  
he sees what's falling down.

"Umm...excuse me there Owle,"  
says Bear,  
one eye open on the floor,  
"I was running Owle and I couldn't stop,  
until I met your door."

Bear rescues his necktie  
from slipping to his knees,  
then rises, so respectfully, saying:  
"If you pleases Owle, we've  
come to ask the, umm..."

"The way, the way!" interrupts Sparrow.  
settling back on Bear's head,

which is the exact height from where  
she likes to look.



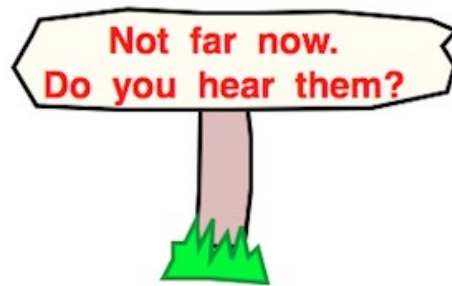
"We want to know the way.  
We do have a map Owle,  
but it only leads to your house  
and surely, we all must go to see  
Cowboy Chicken and his big hat.  
And horses,  
he did mention horses, didn't he?  
Do you have a map Owle  
that leads the way?"

"Oh yes, indeed I have, I do,"  
speaks Owle, handing her his map.  
"As you can see, it offers  
whatever route we like."

A Bear-sized time for thought went by,  
when slowly, that is Bear,  
with Sparrow looking on,  
decided, with Owle's help,  
the route they should begin:

"This one, this one!" they said,  
and off they took between  
the narrow and the green,  
finding clues in clumps of stumps,  
and from arrows made of twigs.

Down they said, down they lead,  
into the forest and over a stream,  
where once they turned a corner was,  
a sign, was meant for them:

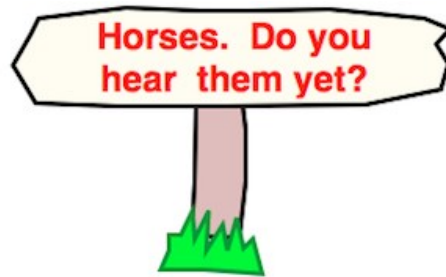


said the sign.

"Hear them?" wonders Bear.  
"Hear what?" wonders Bear.  
All he can hear are crickets.  
"Perhaps if I go a little bit further  
I'll hear what 'them' are."

He moves his massive luggage paws,  
matting down the trail.  
His ears are perked for hearing,  
his nose is sniffing scent.

He can hear the hair in his ears  
but no 'them' there yet,  
until he sees the sign  
which says:



"Horses!"

Bear is certain he can hear them.

"Them horses are pretty smart  
to sound like crickets!"  
thinks Bear,  
as he rumbles forward  
into West Meadow.

But, instead of hearing horses,  
it is Chicken who is screaming:

"That's it folks. Step right up!  
Step up here to the thrills  
and chills of a lifetime!

Some, you'll never forget.  
Some, you'll wish you could!  
But everyone, dear folks,  
goes home a Winner,  
from Tex's Rodeo!"

Chicken is standing behind a big blue booth,  
wearing a red and white, striped, straw hat.  
His tie is black and bows, like two hands  
clasped around his neck.  
His cufflinks are silver spurs  
and sparkle as he speaks:



"That's it, you Sir!"  
He points to Bear.  
Bear looks around nervously  
and then back to Chicken, who declares:  
"Yes Sir, you Sir!  
Just pick a finger, any finger  
and win a Prize!"

Bear steps up  
but a big cigar BANGS  
and Chicken disappears,  
ducks in smoke, behind the booth.

Bear moves closer.

### Chapter Three

Morning has sunk fully.  
A low scent of apple, sits in the air  
sifting to the noontime.  
There is not a cloud to black in the sky.

The crowd waits.  
Bear waits overabundantly.  
He can hear Chicken breathing  
but he cannot see him moving  
and he wonders, oh he wonders,

what is Chicken doing?

He leans over the booth and  
Chicken jumps up like lightning,  
flashing fingers in Bear's eyes.

"That's it, you Sir, pick a finger  
and win a Prize!"

Round the red and white stripes whirl.  
Chicken's in a dance,  
spinning like a top  
until he hops to a stop  
with no fingers in his hands!

"You win! You win!  
You have just won my fingers  
and a brand new blue balloon.  
Everyone, give this Bear a hand!"  
screams Chicken,  
being very careful not to point.

Bear is astonished by his good luck.  
Smiling a grin as wide as his chin,  
he bobs his balloon high in the air  
for all to see.

While the crowd is congratulating Bear  
Chicken is moving swiftly behind  
the booth; loosening ropes  
and pulling out pegs,  
until the boards of the booth  
collapse into place,  
then he adds some stairs  
and hops on stage.

"Ladies and Gents! Your attention please.  
Have a seat my friends, have a seat.  
The show is about to begin!"

When the crowd is seated  
and are comfortably done,  
Chicken paces the stage  
eyeing them, one by one.  
Then he clears his throat,  
"Harrumph" and begins to speak:

"Dear friends, welcome to the  
First Ever Tex's Rodeo!

A verse of legend, shall serve  
as introduction to our  
Special Guest, the  
Blood-living Star of the West,  
Cowboy Chicken!



Cowboy Chicken came out of the West  
a cowhand high on the saddle.  
He is gun-taught and fought  
as well as he hops,  
and he hops from better to best.

He's a tall, tall Chicken,  
full of punch and guts.  
He can wrestle a steer's brand  
right off its rear end  
and not disturb the dust.

There's many a man who hides himself  
when Cowboy Chicken comes riding to town  
and many more maids, who carry his name,  
patiently, against their breast.

Because,  
he can blacken the eye  
of a starlit sky.  
He can bury a tear  
in a short good-bye.

Cowboy Chicken came out of the West  
in pursuit of the utmost danger,  
escaping, a herd of white mice.

Now here he is in person  
the Master of Rope himself,  
Cowboy Chicken!"



The crowd breaks loose in hoots and hollers  
and hoots and hollers fill the sky,  
then slowly die, when  
Cowboy Chicken does not appear.

"What's that C.K.?"  
asks Chicken, looking offstage.

"Oh jeeppers, I see," says Chicken,  
and turns to the crowd:  
"Excuse me folks, excuse me, but it



appears that C.K. is tied up right now,  
but he assures me that he will be with us  
just as soon as he's undone.

In the meantime, if you look over there,  
you'll see Jimmy Crow flying in formation  
with Raven Gillis and Raven Mavory."

The crowd turns to watch,  
and: "Psst. Psst," Chicken calls to Bear.  
Bear ambles over and Chicken  
whispers in his ear:

"May I have my fingers back please?  
"Fingers?" repeats Bear.  
Fingers? wonders Bear.  
"Yes, I need them  
to help Cowboy Chicken."

Bear says nothing. He is looking.  
He has a blue balloon, a sunny afternoon,  
a picture of the bottom of Sparrow's feet,  
but he hasn't any fingers of Chicken.

"Very well Sir," says Chicken,  
respecting Bear like a stranger,  
"Then I will need your help to begin.  
This way please."

Chicken leads Bear behind the stage,  
and, click, the gate is locked,  
as soon as Bear is in.



The crowd is conversing contentedly  
until they are startled  
by the sounds of a fight.

It certainly is a struggle of sorts,  
of fur and feathers, and sharp retorts.  
And then, some muffled grunts.  
Then hop, hop, clump, clump,  
the curtains part and out he steps;  
wearing a too-many-gallon hat  
which has slipped down his face  
leaving him one-eyed only.

His leather vest is branded with  
the names of his favourite cows,  
and leathers creak and spurs jangle  
as he swaggers forth to speak:

"Howdy folks,  
it's mighty fine to meet ya.  
I sure do hope that some of y'all  
'as got the gumption  
to enter the center of this thrill!"

At that, he steps aside,  
revealing behind him,  
a four most vicious-pawed  
armed-with-anger Bear.

It looks like steam

but it must be dreams  
pouring from his nostrils.

"Now who's gonna be the first to ride  
this no-holds-barred Bear?"

Everyone looks at everyone else  
and everyone else looks scared.

"No matter, I'll show you how it's done."  
C.K. lassoes his rope around Bear's neck,  
pulls himself over, and leaps onto his back.

He fires his spurs into Bear's hide  
but Bear can't; so he kicks and scratches  
and rips up turf, as the green-grass-bugs  
flee for their lives,  
from this catapulting-animal-fire.

C.K. holds hot like lead  
to this hurly-whirly-burly Bear  
until Bear suffers wounds of exhaustion,  
and heated panting, towards the earth,  
which finds him, flatly.

"Now who's gonna be next,  
to ride this..." He looks at Bear.  
Bear is a mound on the ground.  
Sparrow jumps to his rescue with a sip  
of her homemade lemonade  
and gives him back his balloon.

Bear is "Thank you." and thirsty  
and gulps the lemonade down.  
He is feeling rather burp and dirty  
but somewhat better, if not yet, quite clear.

He rises slowly, meaning to have a word  
with Cowboy Chicken, but a cloud  
of dust blows up in his face  
as horse and rider thunder by him.  
"Cough, cough." coughs Bear.

All seems quiet,  
"Like the eye of a storm," whispers Sparrow.  
They're waiting to see if Cowboy Chicken

is coming back?

They think they see a cloud of dust,  
and maybe they hear a holler?  
Something is happening,  
they're sure of that.

Hah! There, there!  
They spot some bushes moving  
and they hear a rumbling, a tumbling,  
a growling in the ground sound.  
He's somewhere near and coming closer!

They're wondering where,  
when out of the bushes he bursts!  
A mighty tall cowboy  
in a mighty big hat,  
riding a mighty big horse, so big,  
it looks too close,  
and the crowd screams and scatters.

But Bear is shocked still.  
He grips his balloon tightly.  
Sparrow's claws dig into his head.  
"Ouch!" yelps Bear.  
"Sorry," whispers Sparrow.

They look again, and horse  
and rider have wheeled  
to a stop, in front of them.

"I said you couldn't,  
you cannot see  
the motions I make  
at blinding speed!"  
spouts C.K.

Then he rockets away  
round and round the Oval meadow,  
riding hand-saddle, side-straddle,  
and back-wobble; ducking  
a thousand shadow arrows  
shot over his brow, as he rides,  
up over dips and down.

He flicks his whip, snapping it

to the ground; lifting a small flower  
and sends it sailing, sailing over the heads  
of the crowd, and landing,  
landing at the feet of Bear.  
"Bravo!" shouts Owle.

C.K. rides in a slow circle,  
looking at them one by one,  
then he takes a deep bow  
and addresses them:

"Well, dear folks, y'all can look  
but you ain't never gonna see  
a Cowboy Chicken  
as fine as me!"

And with that, he was gone.

The shock sets in  
at what they had just seen,  
then Owle raised his voice:

"Bravo! Bravo!"  
"That's so!" agrees Sparrow.  
"Cough," coughs Bear,  
his nostrils still flaring.

"Bravo!" shouts the crowd  
again, and again.

Hands clap in admiration  
and a blue balloon floats up  
over their heads  
and into the sky.



## Chapter Four

The afternoon is wet with laziness.  
Idle dreams are the fastest runners seen.  
Moments stretch, into fusion,  
there is a stillness, full of breathing.

Bear is propped up against a tree,  
his elbows on his knees,  
his eyes searching the sky for his balloon.

"A bit of blue please," asks Bear,  
thinking that it might be,  
it could be, somewhere near.  
"If I had a ladder, I bet I could see it."

But he notices that it takes more time  
looking for it, than finding it,  
and more than that, he sees Sparrow  
putting out a picnic of puddings and plums  
and pickles and garlic (for Bear)  
and strawberries, as wet and red  
as the final day of ripeness brings.

Bear searches the sky once more  
and is pretty much certain:

"I will probably find my balloon  
just as soon as I finish my lunch."

And he sits down next to the  
pickles and garlic, and his friends

sit down beside him.

After Bear had finished his first course,  
and then his second,  
they begin to toast the day.

Owle spoke for everyone  
when he said:

"A Toast, my friends, a Toast,  
to our dear friend Chicken,  
who worked so very hard  
to give us an Extraordinary Day!  
Long Live Tex's Rodeo!"

The crowd roars happily  
and Chicken  
takes a sweeping bow.

"And friends," continues Owle,  
"it is true that Cowboy Chicken  
can't be with us right now,  
but he promises he will return."

Let's offer a Toast to our 10-gallon friend:  
The Master of Rope himself,  
Cowboy Chicken!"  
And they all cheered and cheered.

"And, dear friends, let us not forget  
the courage and sportsmanship  
of our brave friend, Bear!"

Their applause embraced the sky  
and held there long,  
and Bear felt tingly inside.

## Chapter Five

The quiet contentment that a full stomach  
and good friends can bring, settled in.

The rodeo day has ended.  
Evening seems marching along.  
Accompanied by the cattercalls of birds

Who sing to the night.

And they walk themselves in company,  
Through the narrowing, deeper black.  
And home seems not so far away,  
And life seems good at that.

THE END.



Ian Hutton

Thank you for reading my stories.  
More stories and videos at: [ianhutton.com](http://ianhutton.com)