

"CHICKS ARE WEIRD"

a true story

by Leigh Dillon

PAUL and BEN sit on their lounge room couch (front stage right) draped in blankets with beanies or their heads in front of a coffee table that is almost completely covered in empty stubbies and pizza boxes. They are watching the football on television (the audience) and are extremely animated. They yell, scream and feel every single kick, mark, handball and goal. CASSIE and her friend JULIE are in the kitchen around a table (front stage left) with books spread across it. Running across the rear of the stage is a clothesline with clothing hanging from it. Next to it is a small tree.

Scene One: The Lounge room

Ben and Paul are on the couch riding every bump of the football - beanies and blankets on - the room is a mess.

BEN *(Building in momentum and excitement)* Come on... come on... run. Come on. Keep going. *(The boys both slowly rise from the couch)* Come, come on, you can...

BEN/PAUL Agghh. *(Dejected, they both flop back onto the couch and reach for a stubby of beer and take a big swill. It's like watching twins)*

PAUL Umpire; he's been doing it all day.

BEN *(Suddenly grabbing Paul's arm)* Hang on. Here we go. This time, come on.

PAUL *(Shouting)* Go down the bloody guts!

BEN/PAUL *(Yelling)* Down the bloody guts!

BEN He's got it, just got to pick it up *(transfixed by the screen, the boys watch in silence)*

BEN/PAUL *(Yelling)* KICK IT!

The boys leap from the couch in unison. They butt chests with one another in celebration (the blankets stay on).

Scene Two: The Kitchen

Cassie, the long suffering housemate of Ben and Paul sits with her friend Julie at the table. They are (attempting) to study.

JULIE *(Frustrated)* My god, how do you ever get anything done with those two around?

CASSIE I do wonder sometimes.

From the lounge room comes more moaning and groaning.

JULIE Do they ever shut up?

CASSIE When they're awake, no.

BEN *(From lounge)* Kick it!

More moaning and groaning from the boys.

JULIE Does this not drive you insane?

CASSIE Yeah, but they're pretty harmless.

JULIE Do they contribute *anything*?

CASSIE Mostly they just sleep and watch TV.

JULIE Do they help with the cleaning?

CASSIE *(Matter of fact)* Of course not.

JULIE Do they put the rubbish out?

CASSIE Nope.

JULIE What about the cooking?

CASSIE *(Dry)* Now you're just being plain silly.

BEN/PAUL *(From lounge, shouting)* BALL!

JULIE I don't know how you do it. *(Cassie replies with a shrug of her shoulders)* No seriously, I don't know why you put up with it *(Julie moves into the lounge and stands behind the boys on the couch)*. They're noisy, annoying and help with nothing. They need a kick up the arse if you ask me.

CASSIE They're alright; just harmless boys with simple pleasures.

JULIE I think they're simple boys who give no pleasure. Either way, it doesn't make it right. Look at them. It's 22 degrees outside and they're tucked under doonas with the blinds drawn and the heater on. I'd kill too be out in the sun rather than being stuck inside having to study all Saturday.

CASSIE I know, but it's not that bad. *(Julie stares at Cassie in disbelief)* Seriously, it's not. I've lived in much worse share houses than this. *(Pause)* Actually this one is one of the better ones.

JULIE If that's your attempt to sell me, I ain't buying. I can't see any positives in sharing a house with these two. *(From the lounge room comes a chorus of booing)* *(Shaking her head)* I really can't.

CASSIE Well for starters, if the footy isn't on during the day then they're sound asleep, which means I get the whole house to myself. I can play music as loud as I like and they never, ever wake up. The two of them are like bears; asleep most of winter.

JULIE Go on.

CASSIE Rent's cheap. They pay for Foxtel. Every single channel and I don't have to pay a cent.

JULIE Go on. Keep in mind that all the cooking and cleaning you have to do around here has set the women's movement back about fifty years.

CASSIE But I do get some enjoyment from them. (Julie looks at her puzzled) I mean let's be honest they're not the sharpest tools in the shed. You have no idea the sort of nonsense I can feed these two for a joke; just to amuse myself.

JULIE *(With a wry smile)* Really?

CASSIE Really.

JULIE Interesting.

CASSIE *(She paces the room)* You see, Julie, these boys will do just about anything I ask them to - cooking and cleaning aside - if they think there's a feed in it for them.

JULIE *(Mischievously)* Anything?

CASSIE *(Cassie moves behind the couch - the boys are oblivious)* One time I told them that the FOX fm were giving return flight tickets to the gold coast and five night accommodation for the first ten people to show up at the studio in their undies. The station is just around the corner. They thought they were certainties.

JULIE Yeah?

CASSIE Should have seen them running up St Kilda road in their Y-fronts and sneakers (Cassie mocks them like a scene from Chariots of Fire).

JULIE What happened when they realised you'd conned them?

CASSIE I was so apologetic. I said, "did I say Fox? I mean't Nova. Sorry guys, I feel terrible!"

JULIE That's gold. What else have you done?

CASSIE When I first moved in they used to eat anything that was in the fridge. Didn't matter what it was and didn't matter how many times I told them not to eat it, they never listened. It could have been the following day's lunch, the previous night's leftovers, or last week's carbonara; nothing was sacred. Anyway, one night when they were out I baked a big, fat chocolate cake and crammed it full of laxatives...I mean crammed it full of laxatives. I cut in half, threw half of it in the bin, left the other half in the fridge and just waited. 24 hours later they were almost killing each other trying to get to toilet. When the laxatives wore off they approached me about the cake. "There was something wrong with that cake, Cassie" they'd said. "I did wonder, something just wasn't quite right with it," I replied. "Yeah, do you think next time you could make the icing a bit thicker?" "Sure," I said in disbelief.

JULIE Alright then, prove it; put this justification of your situation to the test. Do something to them now!

CASIE Okay(*Pacing*)Let me think for a moment. (*pauses*) I'll bet you that I can convince one of them to take a

frozen chicken out of the freezer and peg it on the clothesline using only orange pegs.

JULIE No way.

CASSIE Trust me. This'll be easy. If they think there's a feed in it for them it'll be no problem at all.

JULIE You're on. (The girls shake hands as they moved back to the kitchen)

Scene Three: The Lounge room

Ben sits alone on the couch still engrossed in the football on the television, muttering under his breath. Cassie casually enters the room from stage right rear and stands behind Ben for a few moments. Julie appears just behind her.

CASSIE Where's Paul? *(There is no response)* *(Louder)* Where's Paul? *(She waves her hand in front of his face)*
WHERE'S PAUL?

BEN *(Without looking around)* Dunny.

CASSIE I need you to do me a favour. I'm cooking us all a roast chicken for dinner tonight. You okay with that? I mean, assuming you're home for dinner.

BEN *(He looks around and sees Julie. He's visibly impressed)* Well, I guess that's okay. I mean I was going to cook a parmesan crumbed chicken breast fillet stuffed with olives and sun dried tomatoes served on a bed of polenta with carrots and string beans.

CASSE *(Matter of fact)* No you weren't. You saw that on the Food channel on Foxtel last night. And besides you don't even know what polenta is.

BEN (Denial) But I guess a roast will suffice.

CASSIE Well, I can't tell you what a relief that is. But anyway, if Paul gets out of the toilet anytime today could you ask him to get the frozen chicken out of the freezer and peg on the clothesline. It needs to be defrosted.

BEN Sure.

CASSIE And tell him has to use the orange pegs, okay. Orange pegs only, that's really important.

BEN Orange pegs. Check.

The girls move back into the kitchen. Paul shuffles in from stage right and takes up his seat on the couch next to Ben, still wrapped in his blanket.

BEN Cassie wants you to take a frozen chook out of the freezer and peg it on the clothesline using only orange pegs. She's cooking a roast.

PAUL Yeah righto, at three quarter time.

The boys go back to being engrossed in the television.

Scene Four: The Backyard

Paul enters the rear of stage left with a frozen chicken under his arm, still wrapped in his blanket. What takes place next is comedy of errors as Paul attempts to peg the frozen chicken on the clothesline with orange pegs, without success. He quickly becomes frustrated and throws the chicken on the ground. With hands on hip he shakes his head.

PAUL (Calling from backyard) Ben.

BEN (Without turning around) What?

PAUL Can you ask Cassie if I can tie the bloody chook to a tree? I can't get it pegged to the clothesline.

The girls can be seen spying on Paul from far stage left.

BEN *(Looking quite put out)* Yeah, alright, but if I get food poisoning there'll be hell to pay. I'll kick you into next football season.

PAUL Just ask her.

BEN *(Calls without getting up)* Paul wants to know if he can tie the chook to a tree. He can't get it pegged to the clothesline. Is that okay?

CASSIE *(From bedroom)* Of course, Ben. Why wouldn't it be? *(She and Julie shake their heads in disbelief.)*

BEN *(To Paul in the yard)* Of course it's okay Paul, why wouldn't it be? *(In the background Paul shakes his head and looks around for some string. There is none. He exits rear stage left and then re-enters front of stage left still with the frozen chicken under his arm. He picks up one sneaker then exits before reappearing at the clothesline. He pulls the shoelace out of the sneaker and ties the chicken to the tree. He picks up some of the orange pegs and pegs them to the shoelace, knowing that the using of the orange pegs is of extreme importance. When he is finished there is a look of pride all over his face.)*

Fade Out lights.

Scene Five: The Lounge room

The boys sit tensely on the couch. The game is in its dying stages and the scores are very close. They ride each kick, mark and handball like it could be the last. Periodically during these tense final moments they clutch one another's forearms for support. The tension is killing them. Suddenly the boys are out of their seats urging their team on yelling in support.

PAUL Run.

BEN Go.

PAUL Run.

BEN Come on.

BEN/PAUL KICK IT!

The boys break out into wild celebration. Arms raised, they look to the sky as if to say thank you to the football gods. They fall back onto the couch but don't break their joint focus on the game.

PAUL This is it. If he kicks this it's in the bag.

BEN I can't watch. *(Ben hides his eyes by cowering behind Paul. Not watching the screen. At this moment Cassie and Julie enter from rear stage right and stand behind the boys)*

PAUL Take your time, son. It's all up to you now.

BEN *(Still cowering behind Paul)* Has he kicked it yet?

Paul stands as he follows the ball on the television. Ben finally gets the courage to look now and rises to his feet with Paul. They clutch at each other excitedly. A look of euphoria engulfs them. They scream and raise their arms in sheer delight. Ben stands up on the couch and rips his blanket off revealing he is in a pair of Y-front undies with a football jumper on. Paul seeing this follows Ben's lead and rips his blanket off revealing that he too is in his underwear with a matching football jumper on. The girls, whose presence is still unnoticed laugh loudly. The boys break into song as they hive five each other, hug and butt chests still unaware that the girls are behind them. When Paul turns and sees them he immediately, embarrassed, sits back down on the couch and covers up. Ben carries on a little while longer, but when he too notices the girls he sits back down and covers up, embarrassed. The boys sit quite sheepishly on the couch.

BEN Nice win that.

PAUL Too right.

The girls stare at the boys with a look of bemused bewilderment.

CASSIE Paul.

PAUL Yes, Cassie.

CASSIE Why did you hang that frozen chicken on the tree?

PAUL Because I couldn't get it pegged to the clothesline, it was way too heavy.

CASSIE But why did you try to peg a frozen chicken to the clothesline in the middle of winter?

PAUL Come again?

CASSIE I said, why did you want to peg a frozen chicken to the clothesline in the middle of winter?

PAUL *(Baffled - apprehensively)* Because you told me to. Well, you told Ben to tell me to peg it to the clothesline using nothing but orange pegs.

BEN Ben, why did you tell Paul to peg a frozen chicken to the clothesline in the middle of winter?

The boys look at each other confused.

BEN Is this like a trick question? *(Patronising)* Because you told me to.

CASSIE Hmm. *(She looks at Julie)*. See I told you...easy. *(To the boys)* But you didn't think that was a little odd, given the weather.

BEN No.

CASSIE *(Slowly)* Right. You were going to cook a parmesan crumbed chicken breast stuffed with olives and sun

dried tomatoes on a bed of polenta with carrots and string beans though, right?

BEN Well yes, I was going to, but you wanted to cook your little roast. I can cook gourmet (pronounced *gore-met*) anytime.

CASSIE I see. But you still didn't find it odd me wanting Paul to peg a frozen chook to the clothesline using orange pegs? There was nothing odd about that at all? Not even the use of orange pegs exclusively?

BEN (*Looking at Paul dumfounded*) No.

JULIE That is priceless.

CASSIE Thank you boys, you've made my day.

The boys look at each other perplexed. The boys go back to staring at the television .

BEN (After a few moments) We are still having a roast though?

PAUL I guess so, can't see why not.

They sit in silence for a few moments.

BEN Chicks are weird, mate.

PAUL Tell me about it.

BEN (*To Cassie*) Are we still having a roast for dinner?

Fade out lights - The End

