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The Homesick Chicken

Mary Graham Bonner

When one of Mrs. Turkey's children was stolen by a rat, she decided to take a chicken under her wing — literally.

"Mrs. Hen won't mind," Mrs. Turkey told herself. "She has so many to look after. Honestly, it will probably be a relief."

So Mrs. Turkey called over the nicest-looking chicken, tried to make her voice sound as warm and motherly as a hen's, and welcomed him into the flock. The chicken seemed perfectly happy. Mrs. Turkey fed him along with her own children, kept an eye on him all day, let him play with the turkey chicks.

It was a very pleasant day.

But when evening came, the turkeys gathered for bed — and turkeys, as any chicken could tell you, sleep in trees.

"Come on up," called Mrs. Turkey from the topmost branch.

"I can't get up there," said the chicken.

"Try," said Mrs. Turkey.

The turkey children found this extremely funny. "Gobble, gobble!" they said. "Can't you *fly*?"

The chicken stayed on the ground and looked very small and very unhappy.

"We really can't stay awake any longer," said the turkey children.

"Sleep then, my loves," said Mrs. Turkey. "You are good children who know how to roost properly."

"I could roost just fine," moaned the chicken, "if you came down a little lower."

"Now this is annoying," said Mrs. Turkey. "Didn't I feed you well today? Didn't I let you play with my wonderful children?"

"Yes," said the chicken.

"Well then. Can't you show a little gratitude and come to bed? Prove you're fine enough to belong to a turkey family."

"But I *don't want* to belong to a turkey family," said the chicken. "I'm a chicken."

I'm used to chicken ways. I wish I were home."

"Then go home, you little silly," said Mrs. Turkey. "I don't know why I bothered. Shame on you, not being able to fly to a simple branch."

"Thank you for the lovely day," said the chicken, very politely. "But I really must go. I'm a bit homesick, and I want my mother."

He began to cry.

And from not very far away came a familiar sound: *cackle, cackle!*



Mother Hen came half-running, half-fluttering through the dark. She was furious — and so relieved she couldn't really manage the furious part.

"There you are," she said. "Naughty bird."

"Please take me home to the roost," said the chicken. "Just take me home."

"You had no right to take him in the first place," Mother Hen called up at Mrs. Turkey.

"If you weren't so far down, I'd argue with you properly," said Mrs. Turkey politely.

"Hm," said Mother Hen.

She took the chicken home, to a roost that was exactly the right height for a chicken. And she cackled a happy Good Night.

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