I feel that half the village have a vested interest in my chickens after the shenanigans of trying to recapture the escapees last week so therefore I thought it might be a tale (tail feather perhaps!) for the Burnby scribe’s distribution.

In my previous life (pre-divorce, pre-housesale, pre-lifefail!) I had four wonderfully well behaved hens. They were no bother, good layers, put themselves to roost and happy and content in their run in the vegetable patch. But they couldn't be accommodated in subsequent rented houses and so they were rehomed. Queenie and Stevie to a friend; Jet and Rex—a pair of good looking black rocks (and no, that's not Kanye West I'm talking about—if this allusion escapes you go ask a teenager!)—to my sister on her and her husband’s farm. Of the four, Jet is the last remaining, somewhat ageing, hen. She's now affectionately known as ‘big momma’. As her name suggests, she's been a prolific breeder and now Zach and I are settled in the village, my sister thought we might like a couple of Jet’s babies to call our own.

Garden fenced and said chickens picked up, I spent a blissful evening basking in the knowledge I was indeed, at last, living the good life! But, as always, life and chickens had other plans. Long gone my lovely natured tame hens and in their place two adject tear aways. If chickens got ASBO’s mine would have one! They are chicken delinquents. Ironically, we had named them Minnie and Minx and they lived up to their namesake. The first, Minnie, didn't even make it into the run. On opening the crate, she managed to dive out and was gone before you could say “Paxo!” Zach sobbed for the lost chicken—cries of “my chickennnnn” heard long into the night and a frantic google search later, I'd found an identical chicken to pick up the following day.

New chicken safely collected and in the run. Another afternoon basking in the knowledge that this time, it was surely going to be the good life. I watched with a sense of pride as Zach, the dog, the chickens, all ran round the garden; our little family, I thought, what could be nicer! That evening, I ventured forth to check upon the chooks and secure them for the night. Imagine to my horror, only one chicken to be found. Oh no, I cried! “My Chickennnnnn (again)” Zach cried! And then, low and behold, a sudden squawking from the vicinity of the hedge and a chicken’s head and neck appeared like a periscope from amidst the foliage. “Chicken Ahoy!” Cried Zach and we set about trying to catch it. But, I had not bargained upon feral chickens being so hard to catch. We chased said chicken up and down dale, through hedges, gardens, and yonder fields only for it to eventually, after an hour of such escapades, to run clucking back into our garden from whence it had begun. Zach and I watched with baited breath, not daring to hope, that by some lucky chance it would go back into the run. It didn't. It decided the hedge was a more attractive proposition by far!

With half the village’s undergrowth in my hair, the seat ripped out of my trousers, and trailing goosegrass, I decided enough was enough. The chicken was going to have to take its chances. I thought perhaps, it might just roost in the hedge. With that thought in mind, I resolved to get up at first light and search for it whilst it was placid and sleepy and in the hedge. In my head, this was a much less complicated idea than it turned out to be. For a start, first light is currently about 4am. I apologise to any neighbour who thought they were being burgled or ransacked or worse at about this time on Friday morning. No, it was a rather tired and bedraggled me that was crawling through the hedge on hands and knees whilst juggling with the torch of their phone and clucking in a demented manner. For the record, I didn't find the chicken. I might of seemed to have temporarily lost my head, but sadly I didn't find a chicken.

Of course, I then had to replace this lost chicken, with another from where I'd got the first replacement chicken from! Another night, reflecting—in a rather more subdued manner—upon the joys of country living; this time with two tame chickens, a dog, Zach, and my mum. Could life feel any sweeter? I know what you are predicting—the loss of either one or two of the chickens, perhaps? No, events took a more comical turn as Minx decided that she would make a re-appearance on the scene. Tipped off by Linda from next door-the oracle of all oracles-- we raced round to the other side of the village where the chicken had taken refuge in the rather glorious garden of Mr and Mrs Garside. The chicken led a merry chase round the garden before deciding it liked the slightly wilder environs of the field of Orchard House. Aided and abetted by Mrs Gallon and her two ever-so-lovely but slightly bemused girls, we managed to corale the chicken into a corner. After a few near misses and several lost feathers, the silly chicken, with no where left to run, stuck her head through the stock fencing and was finally locked in the slammer (crate). The convict was quickly dispatched (nothing more sinister than back to my sister’s farm I assure you!) and the two remaining chickens have settled into their new surroundings and are laying admirably. To date, two lots of double yolkers (and not double jokers like the first pair!) have made their way to the breakfast table.

Please note, no chickens were intentionally or otherwise hurt in this egg-cellent drama!